

Orbis

A Journal of World Affairs

Volume 44, Number 4, Fall 2000

Arthur Waldron
On Mao Zedong

GREAT POWER TRAJECTORIES

Robert J. Lieber on the U.S. and Europe

Stephen Blank on the U.S. and Russia

Li Jingjie on Russia and China

Gilbert Rozman on the U.S., Russia, and China

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Taiwan's Politics after the Vote

James A. Robinson and Deborah A. Brown

Taiwan's Security in Light of the Vote

June Teufel Dreyer

Nixon and China after 28 Years

Michael Jay Friedman



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Even in Kashgar, a city of 180,000 in China's remote, landlocked Xinjiang region, the Great Helmsman shows the way forward. But not only is Mao's legacy now officially regarded as mixed, Turkic separatists are also challenging Han Chinese control. The viewer is left to wonder: is the statue going up or coming down? (Photograph: Marieke de Laat)

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Editor's Column

Such is the hectic flow of life in middle age, when the work load peaks just as the body begins to break down, that I let a personal anniversary of sorts slip by unnoticed in our previous issue. The Summer 2000 issue of *Orbis* was the twenty-fifth under my editorship. "Hard to believe, Harry," in the signature phrase of Hall of Fame Philadelphia Phillies outfielder and broadcaster Richie Ashburn. Harvey Sicherman continues to quip that my biggest regret in life was taking on *Orbis*, but I would regret many things more than that if I were disposed to dwell upon past mistakes, and in any case editing *Orbis* has its compensations. We may not be the most prestigious or widely read journal of world affairs, but nowhere else can experts publish such in-depth, annotated analyses of international issues bearing on present and future foreign policy choices. In that, I believe, we combine the best features of policy-oriented journals with the best features of scholarly journals.

That is why I want to do something here that I ought to have done last time, which is to thank the authors who contributed articles and review essays to the past twenty-five issues. Without you I would have had to fill all the pages myself,

in which case I would truly have regretted this job. Please continue to think of *Orbis* when future manuscripts exit your printer. I also want to thank all those who have worked in the FPRI publications office during my tenure, especially associate editors Roger Donway, Adam Garfinkle, Virginia Montijo, Thomas Eckmier, Shaynee Snider, Jill Garner, Heather Chapin, Bridget Grimes, and Stephen Winterstein. Because of you my life has been considerably less hectic than it would otherwise have been.

In These Pages

The Economist ought to win an award for the best magazine cover of the year. In June, following the unprecedented summit meeting in Pyongyang between the leaders of North and South Korea, it depicted Kim Jong-il, mysterious son and heir to the immortal Great Leader Kim Il-sung, smiling and waving beneath the headline, "Greetings, Earthlings." Is the summit another North Korean ploy to dupe foreign powers into assisting the country with aid and technology, thereby propping up the communist dictatorship? Or is Kim Jong-il serious about opening up and perhaps liberalizing North Ko-

rea in the same manner that Chiang Kai-shek's son began the process of democratization in the Republic of China on Taiwan? Indeed, have we witnessed the beginning of the process of Korean reunification, and if so, will that process go smoothly in the manner of Germany's reunification, or create new tensions and crises in the only region of the world where three great powers (Russia, China, and Japan) live as uneasy neighbors while a fourth (the United States) endeavors to manage their neighborhood?

The next U.S. administration will be obliged to reckon with those questions, albeit the answers will not become apparent for years. Hence, we are pleased to present in these pages a rich collection of perspectives on the relations among the great powers involved in Northeast Asia and the various triangles they appear to form. Stephen Blank, our inveterate Russia watcher, begins by exposing the sham that is America's "strategic partnership" with the Russian Federation. Li Jingjie, versed in history and strategy as they appear from the standpoint of Beijing, describes the principles that define the Russo-Chinese strategic partnership and assesses the degree to which it is an anti-American combination. Gilbert Rozman of Princeton, a veteran theorist of triangular diplomatic systems, elaborates on Li's analysis and explores the real or alleged interests lying behind the friendly Russo-Chinese rhetoric. June Teufel Dreyer and Victor D. Cha take hard looks at Taiwan and Korea, the most deli-

cate flashpoints in East Asia, and James A. Robinson and Deborah A. Brown examine exactly what is meant by mature democracy and the progress made toward it by the people of Taiwan in the wake of their latest presidential election.

Our review essays continue the theme. No individual casts a longer shadow over the Asia-Pacific than Mao Zedong, and the eminent Chinese historian Arthur Waldron reviews for us three recent reassessments of Mao's persona and legacy. Likewise, no American initiative casts a longer shadow over the present diplomacy in the region than Nixon's opening to China in 1972. Its wisdom, timing, and legacy remain subjects of intense debate, as Michael Jay Friedman describes.

Finally, Robert J. Lieber takes polite exception to my Winter 2000 column arguing that the push for European integration has always been in a state of tension with the push for transatlantic cooperation, and that the end of the Cold War has only exacerbated that tension. The truth, Lieber argues convincingly, is that Europe and the United States simply have too many interests in common and too much at stake to permit their strategic and economic partnership to collapse.

Night Thoughts of an I.R. Professor

It was said of George Washington that he was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of

his countrymen." In the twentieth century that gave rise to a quip among baseball fans to the effect that Washington (speaking now of the city) was "first in war, first in peace, and last in the American League." That could not have been coined before World War II, because the Washington Senators won two championships in the 1920s and another in 1933, all in the era of Babe Ruth's Yankees, and only finished last twice (1944 and 1949) so long as the truly pathetic Philadelphia Athletics were in the league. Sadly, the Senators left Griffith Stadium for the Twin Cities in 1961 to be replaced by an expansion team that fled in its turn for another pair of twin cities (Dallas–Fort Worth), leaving the nation's capital bereft of Major League Baseball.

Meanwhile, in international politics, the Cold War ended and the U.S.-led coalition won a stunning victory in the Gulf War, but otherwise the Bush and Clinton administrations stumbled into the post-Cold War era unsure of what they meant to accomplish or how to go about doing it. Hence, if one were to update the old quip it would have to read "Washington: first in war, last in peace, and out of the American League."

Last in peace? Is that not rather harsh, not to mention unjustified? Perhaps so, but it is also a cliché that the United States is perversely skilled at winning wars only to lose the peace that follows them. Statesmen versed in the tradition of *realpolitik* have, their alleged amorality notwithstanding, been far

more adept on balance in that most delicate of diplomatic arts, war termination. I use the term "war termination" instead of the usual term "peacemaking" to shift our perspective on what it means to bridge the transition from war to peace. Peacemaking implies ending the fighting—no argument there—but also "making" a "peace." If this is taken to mean crafting a treaty that *everyone can live with*, resolving the issues left over by war, and planting no new seeds of discord, then that, too, is unobjectionable. But if peacemaking is taken to mean crafting some new world order, some entirely new system of international relations that is supposed to eliminate or transcend the issues and conflicts of interest left hanging by the war just ended, then it amounts to something quite different than what is implied by the term "war termination." Some historical examples may suffice to illustrate the distinction.

As Henry Kissinger explained with theoretical exactitude and historian Paul Schroeder demonstrated with empirical thoroughness, terminating the wars of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic era was simply impossible before somebody won complete victory.¹ The revolution had declared war on the monarchical system itself and pledged to assist all the

¹ See Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and Problems of Peace, 1812–1822* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957); and Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

peoples of Europe to throw off their chains. The monarchies understandably responded by forming a series of coalitions determined to crush the French republic and its tributary states out of existence. Napoleon in turn declared war on the balance of power and its system of sovereign states. The monarchies again rallied together in self-defense and pledged to efface the Napoleonic empire. To be sure, a truce was attempted with the French Republic in the Treaty of Amiens of 1802, and Prince Metternich of Austria tried to mediate between Napoleon and his enemies in 1813 (not least because Napoleon had taken the Austrian Hapsburg princess to wife in a bid to establish a more legitimate dynasty). But the collapse of both those efforts within months demonstrated the futility of playing peacemaker between two antithetical ideologies. By the spring of 1814 Napoleon's dwindling forces had been pushed back into France, whereupon the British foreign secretary Lord Castlereagh traveled to the continent to talk terms, for the first time, with his coalition partners, the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians. The result was a model of war termination. In the Treaty of Chaumont the four powers disposed of almost all the territorial issues raised by a quarter-century of war. Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland would recover their independence, the Low Countries would be unified under the Dutch monarchy, the Italian states would be restored to their legitimate monarchical rulers, and a loose German Confeder-

ation, able to defend itself but threatening to no one, would be created to take the place of the defunct Holy Roman Empire. The four powers also agreed to continue their alliance lest the French attempt any future mischief, and they imposed a "regime change" on France itself. The Bourbon heir Louis XVIII would assume the throne but grant a constitution to his people so that the revolution would not appear wholly in vain.

The Great Powers then repaired to the Congress of Vienna to complete their business and sign treaties with France. Napoleon interrupted matters by escaping from Elba and provoking another round of battles ending in Waterloo, whereupon the allies imposed harsher terms on the French. But the aim of Metternich, Castlereagh, and the others remained that of settling all the issues that caused or were created by the wars, and of taking care not to sow the seeds of future wars. We teachers often depict the Congress of Vienna as the first attempt to create a sort of new world order, albeit a conservative one. We cite the Congress System, whereby the powers agreed to consult and coordinate to avert any future disturbances, the Holy Alliance designed to crush revolutionary movements in the future, and the establishment of a clear balance of power preventing any one state from imposing its will as the French tried to do. All that is arguable, but would have meant nothing in the absence of universally accepted arrangements concerning those issues

that might have led subsequently to vital conflicts of interest. Above all, the French themselves had to be reconciled, and thanks to the moderation of the allies in victory and the shrewdness of the French diplomat Talleyrand, such an outcome was achieved.

The proof that the Congress of Vienna was about war termination more than abstract, much less idealistic, peacemaking can be found not in its successes, but in its failures. First, the Congress erred in creating a unified Netherlands, because the French-speaking, Catholic Walloons and the Flemings dependent on the port of Antwerp had no love for the Protestant Dutch and the favoritism they bestowed on Amsterdam. In 1830 the Belgians, as they came to be called, launched a war of independence. Happily, the concert of powers was able to terminate that war in wise fashion by spinning off an independent Belgium and guaranteeing its neutrality. The other mistake of the Congress of Vienna was more serious: it had not invited, and its settlements did not include, the Ottoman Turkish Empire, which still ruled the entire Balkan peninsula and Middle East. Russia, Austria, Britain, and France all had vital interests in one or both of those regions, and their failure to address the future of the Ottoman lands as Turkish power receded provoked an endless series of crises over the "Eastern Question" that ended in the crack-up of the concert system, the Holy Alliance, and the balance of power in the Crimean War of 1854–56.

But at least that great generation of statesmen at Chaumont and Vienna had tried, for the most part successfully, to terminate the wars of 1792–1815 so as not to sow dragon's teeth for the future. The peacemakers at the Congress of Paris of 1856 were far less successful. The victorious British, French, and Turks imposed humiliating terms on the defeated Russians, including the demilitarization of Russia's own ports on the Black Sea. Not surprisingly, the tsar and his ministers cast off all sense of duty toward the repose of Europe and pursued foreign policy with one aim in mind: abrogate those Black Sea clauses, recover Russia's full sovereignty, and resume the pursuit of what they considered Russia's legitimate rights and influence in the Ottoman Empire and Balkans. Thus were planted the seeds of much Russian mischief and future Russo-Turkish wars. Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian prime minister and then German chancellor from 1862 to 1890, understood the difference between war termination and peacemaking in its utopian sense. He set out to unify the thirty-odd German states under the scepter of his king, Wilhelm I, and began by leading the German Confederation into a war against Denmark in 1862. The conflict arose over the disputed succession of the border provinces of Schleswig and Holstein, and the Prussian and Austrian armies quickly occupied them in the name of the German national cause. Bismarck then made peace with the Danes, but he purposely did *not*

practice war termination. That is, he did not liquidate the contentious issue, but left the permanent disposition of the provinces up for grabs. The result was a predictable quarrel between Berlin and Vienna over the administration of Schleswig and Holstein that broke up the German Confederation and erupted in a second war in 1866. The Prussians triumphed (though it was a nearer thing than most people realize), expelled Austrian influence from Protestant Germany, and set up a North German Confederation under Prussian leadership. But now that his business with Austria was done, Bismarck was careful to practice war termination. When his king and the Prussian army chiefs wanted to annex Austrian territory or otherwise punish Vienna, Bismarck ranted and raved and threatened to resign until he won the king over to a peace of reconciliation with Austria that left the Hapsburgs intact in their own realms and secure in their own interests. Bismarck thus laid the groundwork for the German-Austrian alliance that followed in 1879.

Secure on his eastern flank (the Russians caring about nothing save those Black Sea clauses) and on his southern flank (the Austrians having been pacified), Bismarck turned his sights on the second French empire of the incompetent, mercurial Napoleon III. He calculated that the remaining independent German states, the Catholic kingdoms of Baden, Wurttemberg, and Bavaria, could be persuaded to join in a unified German Empire if

their nationalism was aroused by a conflict with France. So he maneuvered Napoleon III into the war of 1870. The Prussian-led German army triumphed again, and the German Empire was proclaimed at, of all places, Versailles. Declaring Germany a satiated power and himself a man of peace, Bismarck again attempted to practice war termination by offering the French terms they could live with. Alas, this time he was frustrated. The Prussian general staff demanded the annexation of the French border provinces of Alsace-Lorraine so as to improve Germany's *defensive* military position in case of a future French attempt at revenge. Bismarck protested, but this time the army won out. The upshot was that the French lust for *revanche* grew ever more heated, and after Bismarck's dismissal France found an ally in Russia in 1894. The German general staff reacted to the danger of a war on two fronts by crafting the blatantly *offensive* Schlieffen Plan that ensured that any conflict in eastern Europe was bound to drag in France and—because the plan required an invasion of that neutral Belgium established in 1839—Great Britain as well. Thus were planted the seeds of World War I.

Have American statesmen ever practiced good war termination, or is it true that the United States always fights total war in the hope of imposing, or persuading others to embrace, total peace? Clearly, Theodore Roosevelt understood war termination when he mediated the Treaty of Portsmouth that ended

the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. He was under no illusions that either the imperialist Russians or Japanese could be persuaded to honor the Open Door—free access to trade and investment for all nations—in their spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea. Rather, he hoped simply to broker a peace that would maintain a balance of power among the rival imperialists in order to prevent the domination of China by any one of them, and so preserve a measure of security for American interests there. It was a tough negotiation, but he succeeded in terminating the war so well that within three years Russia and Japan established a partnership of their own.

Woodrow Wilson was not interested in war termination. He asked Congress to declare war on Germany in April 1917 as part of a moral crusade to rid the world of militarism and imperialism altogether, and his elaborate blueprints for the postwar world, including the Fourteen Points and twenty-four “principles, ends, and particulars,” were either vague declarations of the way things ought to be, such as universal disarmament, or specific arrangements derived from the application of abstract principles, such as an independent Poland with access to the sea. At no point did Wilson ask: what conflicts of national interest is this war about, how can those conflicts be resolved in a way everyone (including Germany and the Hapsburg monarchy) can live with, and how can we achieve that without sowing the seeds of new conflicts? As a result, no major

power and few minor powers came away satisfied from Versailles, the United States included, and all manner of seeds of discord were planted in Europe—and Asia. The one positive thing that was accomplished at the end of World War I was a regime change in Germany when the kaiser abdicated and a democratic republic emerged. Indeed, it was a better regime change than the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814 because it happened spontaneously rather than being imposed by victorious foreigners. But the Paris Peace Conference (no conference was so inaptly named) managed to cripple democracy in Germany through the punitive clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. That was not Wilson's fault, you may say. Oh yes it was, because Wilson was the one who first proposed reparations in the Fourteen Points, it was the American delegation that inserted the infamous “war guilt clause” that so outraged the Germans and called into question the whole moral basis of the treaty, and it was Wilson's treasury that refused to extend Europe a nickel in loans, much less write off a nickel of the allied war debt, which in turn forced the French and British to squeeze Germany all the more. To be sure, Wilson rued the self-interested policies of the victorious allies, but he never questioned for a moment that Germany deserved to be punished.

The Republican administration that followed picked up some of the pieces. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes hosted the Washington conference in hopes of

preventing new conflicts in the Pacific and East Asia. Britain, France, Japan, the United States, and other powers in Asia accepted limitations on their navies and agreed to respect the integrity of China and the Open Door. But that just amounted to good intentions and high principle. To achieve genuine war termination Hughes would have had to purge the root causes of Sino-Japanese conflict and satisfy Japan's perceived need for outlets for its booming population, markets for exports, sources of raw materials, and security for its existing and internationally recognized empire that stretched from Taiwan to Korea and southern Manchuria. Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress placed high tariffs on foreign exports in 1921 and banned Japanese immigration in 1924, while the various nationalists, communists, and warlords in China strove to outdo each other in xenophobic hostility to foreign investment, especially that of Japan. None of that is sufficient to explain why crazed military leaders seized control of the Japanese government after 1931 and launched it on a suicidal career of conquest. But it does demonstrate that the seeds of future wars were either planted or nourished in spite of what appeared to be a grand "peacemaking" exercise.

Franklin D. Roosevelt did no better than Wilson. He purposely postponed negotiations with Churchill and Stalin about war aims and peace aims until the Teheran Conference of 1943, and did not begin to get down to terms until Yalta

in January 1945. His motive was to avoid raising any potentially contentious issues lest the Grand Alliance dissolve before the unconditional surrender of the Axis. Perhaps he was right. But that meant that real war termination—liquidation of the issues that caused or were raised by the war in a manner everyone could live with—was scarcely begun by the time Roosevelt died. To be sure, had the Cold War not broken out between 1946 and 1950 all might have been settled through the United Nations led by Roosevelt's Four Policemen (the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and Nationalist China). But the Cold War broke out in good part *because* no war termination had taken place. So the disposition of Germany, the governments of liberated states in Eastern Europe, the future of the Middle East and the European colonial empires, and the disposition of the vast regions conquered by Japan were all up for grabs.

But surely, one may say, great coalitions always break up when their common enemy is vanquished. Add to that the extreme ideological cleavage between Washington and Moscow, Stalin's paranoia and brutality, the American atomic monopoly, and the looming Red Army, and it is difficult to see how a Cold War of sorts could have been avoided. I agree with all that. But it does not suffice to explain the specific stalemate over the status of Germany and prospects for West German remilitarization, a stalemate caused in

great part by the disputes among the NATO allies themselves.² Above all, the fact that a Cold War ensued does not suffice to explain why the United States was drawn into protracted wars in Korea and Vietnam. What made those wars possible, or made them seem necessary, was *botched war termination*. The Big Three powers of World War II never got around to addressing the questions of what would become of the Japanese empire after Japan's power was broken. Roosevelt did make some bold, if overly optimistic, attempts to concede, and thereby limit, Soviet spheres of influence in Manchuria and Mongolia in return for signing a treaty with Chiang Kai-shek. But he quite blithely ruled that Taiwan should be "returned" to China. As for Korea, well where is Korea, and why should it command our attention? Southeast Asia? There FDR toyed with the notion of forbidding the French to return, but never followed up, and in any case the British opposed assaults on European colonialism. So the United States let Vietnam slide—it didn't seem very important.

What I am trying clumsily to suggest is that the Korean and Vietnamese wars were not just examples of the "swordplay" of the superpowers, or the American obsession with containment of

communism. Those regions might never have been disputed at all if American and Soviet diplomats had included them on their agendas before World War II was over, in the manner of Castlereagh at Chaumont. Instead, no arrangements having been made for them, their fates were decided by the immediate need in the late summer of 1945 to occupy them for the sole purpose of disarming their Japanese occupiers. Soviet troops moved into northern Korea and Americans into the south. Chinese troops moved into northern Vietnam and British Empire troops into the south. The occupiers had no instructions as to what to do with the inhabitants or even to cooperate with the other occupation force. And so those countries were *made* into seedbeds of future wars. We cannot know what would have happened "if only," and I don't wish to push the argument too far. But it is certainly possible that, Cold War or not, the wars in Korea and Vietnam would never have happened if the victorious powers had occupied them jointly, or agreed in advance on their political status as unified nations.

What has any of this to do with today? At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany, many of us pundits called urgently for a new Congress of Vienna. It might even have been held in Vienna since Austria was an excellent, indeed the sole, example of an amicable Soviet-Western agreement to reunify, withdraw from, and neutralize a contested country

² On the German question in the early Cold War, see the monumental history by Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945–1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

(it happened in 1955). At this new Congress of Vienna, Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, or even Mikhail Gorbachev himself, might have sat down with the heads of government or foreign secretaries of all the other European states, plus the non-European NATO members, in order to hammer out a termination to the Cold War. It never occurred, of course, and the Cold War ended peaceably anyway thanks to a miraculous regime change that cracked up the Soviet Union and ousted the Communists in Moscow. Blessed events indeed, and since 1991 the Western world has never been more secure and prosperous. But the way the Cold War ended meant that no understandings of any kind were achieved beyond that regarding the unification of Germany. What we got instead was the usual ethereal American talk of a new world order and proclamations of strategic partnerships (viz. the "Partnership for Peace") that are worse than useless for being so vacuous.

Harvey Sicherman called in these pages for a substantive diplomatic program designed to win the peace after the Cold War.³ If I get my way as editor, he will be revisiting and updating that essay around the question, "Has the peace already been lost?" I shall be anxious to read what he writes, because I cannot help but worry over the utter absence of war termination in the wake of the Soviet implosion.

³ Harvey Sicherman, "Winning the Peace," *Orbis*, Fall 1994, pp. 523–44.

No understandings exist over the future status of the former Soviet republics, or the Baltic states, or the oil-rich Caucasus, or security in the Persian Gulf, or the permissible futures of the Koreas and Taiwan. No understandings exist over who may intervene where, in what manner, for what purpose, and under whose umbrella. (The Russians and Chinese regarded Kosovo as a "war of NATO aggression," and under international law they were right.) No understandings exist concerning missile defense, and those limiting various weapons of mass destruction are in danger of unraveling. As a result, Russia and the United States, two empires that were for the most part amicable between 1776 and 1917 and whose geopolitical and economic interests do not naturally clash much at all, find themselves feuding all over the map, as Stephen Blank catalogs in his article.

Perhaps the most damning examples of botched war termination, however, are in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. The United States entered the Iraqi, Bosnian, and Kosovar conflicts late, but that is habitual—a result of Americans' happy remoteness from Eurasian hot spots and insouciance toward distant crises until "Humpty Dumpty" has already fallen off the wall. Once engaged, however, the United States failed in all three cases to devise a strategy for liquidating the wars and pursuing a settlement unlikely to spark future wars. Hence, large American military forces remain on station, at wasting

expense, in the Gulf and the Balkans, and will not depart for the foreseeable future. No regime changes occurred (Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic are still in power), no boundary changes (the multiethnic so-called state of Bosnia survives, the multiethnic Kosovo is still technically part of Yugoslavia, and the Kurds, Shi'ites, and other oppressed peoples remain "citizens" of Iraq), and no healthy population transfers (such as would have occurred had the Serbs and Croats been permitted to terminate their war over Bosnia)—in short, no *cloture*.

The failure of the post-Cold War powers to practice war termination means that none has even been asked to articulate what its vital interests are, thereby maximizing the chances of unhappy surprises. America is doubtless safe enough in the medium run, but seeds of war may have been planted, may even be sprouting, that could have been uprooted. China, in particular, seems to be regarded by much of the Right and Left alike as a defeated nation, as if it had been an ally of the Soviet Union rather than a close partner of the United States in the end game of the Cold War.

China did not lose that contest, and however much we may deplore its regime, we must remember that fact. Nor did Russia lose the Cold War. In fact, the Russian republic under Boris Yeltsin did the most of all to win it. And yet, the only discernible strategy the United States seems to have toward China and the dubious government of Russia is—regime change. Overthrow yourselves, then no doubt your successors will engage in real war termination . . . on our (American) terms.

The world does not work that way. In the real world, even odious regimes may advance some legitimate national interests. In such a world, the way to secure peace is not to inveigh against war in general, or pretend that globalization has made it impossible, but to weigh real conflicts of interests and passions, and horse-trade before it's too late. Diplomatic historians know that the war prevented, that is, the war that never happened, is as real as the war that breaks out, and that, as Bismarck said, the signs of great statecraft are generosity in design, humanity in execution, and moderation in success.



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Pillars of the Sino-Russian Partnership

by Li Jingjie

If since the end of the Cold War relations between China and Russia and each of the other great powers have experienced numerous complications, then the development of Sino-Russian relations has, on the contrary, been relatively smooth.¹ As early as December 1992, the two governments announced that they were officially “friendly” and began to develop broad bilateral relations. A second stage commenced in September 1994, when China and Russia defined their relations as a “constructive partnership,” promised to give bilateral relations a long-term stable character, and began to seek opportunities to cooperate internationally. A third stage, which continues to the present, began in 1996 with the announcement that Moscow and Beijing would devote themselves to establishing and developing a “strategic partnership.”

The first task of the present paper is to offer a broad-ranging discussion of the content and conduct of Sino-Russian relations, expanding on a previous English-language article dating from 1997,² and based on official Sino-Russian documents and leadership statements. The second task is to analyze the U.S. factor as it influences Sino-Russian and “triangular” relations. For quite some time observers have doubted whether this triangular relationship, a cliché during the latter Cold War, exists today. As the international situation develops and changes, this question seems more and more difficult to dodge.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Inter-University Study Group on the United States and China on May 1, 2000.

² Li Jingjie, “From Good Neighbors to Strategic Partners,” in *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. Sherman Garnett (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 71–97.

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Distinguishing Features of Sino-Russian Partnership

The Sino-Russian announcement of strategic partnership was not the empty manifesto that some claimed, but rather had real content. From speeches and documents issued by Russian and Chinese leaders, it is possible to discern the aims and special features of their strategic partnership.

Mutual respect and equality. First, China and Russia have agreed that mutual respect and equality are the most important principles for developing and maintaining healthy bilateral relations. They pledge noninterference in each other's internal affairs and respect for the free choice of their people. In the past, China and the Soviet Union quarreled over ideological correctness and inevitably caused such interference. Now, China and Russia repeatedly declare that the people of every nation have the right to start from their own national circumstances, without outside interference, and choose their own social, economic, and political systems.³ Although the reform paths of the two countries diverge somewhat, that difference does not impinge upon bilateral relations. Unlike the West, China does not use the breakup of the Soviet Union and the internal crises of Russia to point fingers and exert pressure. Likewise, Russia does not use China's so-called human rights and democracy problems as an excuse to collude with the West and to stir up trouble in China. In brief, their mutual contacts leave neither China nor Russia with a feeling of humiliation.

Mutual respect and equality also imply mutually supporting efforts to safeguard each other's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. For instance, China treats the Chechen problem as Russia's internal affair and supports Russian efforts to integrate more closely the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), just as Russia supports China's position on the Taiwan question. On November 24, 1998, when Jiang Zemin visited Russia, the Russian side reaffirmed its "four noes" position: no support for any conception of "Taiwan independence"; no acceptance of the position of "two Chinas" or "one China and one Taiwan"; no support for Taiwan's participation in the United Nations or other international organizations in which only sovereign states participate; and no sales of weapons to Taiwan.⁴ Chinese and Russian public approval suggests that this strategic partnership could be a model for post-Cold War great power relations.

A new security outlook and model. A second theme of the strategic partnership involves the discarding of Cold War logic and its replacement by a new security outlook and model. Thus, China and Russia have successfully resolved their long-standing border dispute and turned even that root of conflict into a bond of peace and cooperation. The two countries have a

³ "Zhong guo lianhe shengming" (Sino-Russian Declaration), *Renmin ribao*, Apr. 26, 1996.

⁴ "Jiang Zemin zongtong he Yelqing zongtong juxin feizhengshihuiwu" (President Jiang Zemin and President Yeltsin on Their Unofficial Meeting), *Renmin ribao*, Nov. 25, 1998.

common border almost 2,700 miles long, and border clashes brought them to the brink of war as recently as 1969. After normalization of bilateral relations, both sides took existing border agreements as their foundation, followed officially recognized international legal principles, and in a spirit of give-and-take signed, in May 1991 and September 1994, two agreements regarding their mutual borders. In November 1998 China and Russia declared that following the conclusion of the boundary demarcation work on the eastern and western sections, the countries had for the first time in their history precisely demarcated their borders. Except for two small sections, the Sino-Russian border question was completely resolved. This establishes a firm foundation for the development of long-term and stable friendly relations. At the same time, the two sides made efforts to bring order to the border regions and stimulate cross-boundary economic cooperation in the interest of joint development and prosperity.

Under their strategic partnership, China and Russia no longer see each other as latent military opponents or look to military force as the primary means for maintaining their security. In Shanghai in April 1996, China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed an agreement on confidence-building measures in the border area. All parties renounced offensive military action on their respective borders and pledged to limit the scale, scope, and number of military exercises, inform each other of military activities within one hundred kilometers of the border, and invite each other to observe any such exercises.⁵ In April 1997 the same five countries signed an agreement on the mutual reduction of military forces in the border area, under which military contingents within one hundred kilometers of the border cannot exceed 130,040 troops and are to maintain a defensive posture, refrain from threatening activities or efforts to gain any unilateral advantage, exchange information concerning border-area troop strength, and carry out inspections to verify compliance.

China and Russia recognize that these confidence-building and disarmament agreements are documents of great historical significance. In the Asia-Pacific region they are an especially pioneering achievement, and on a world scale may serve as a model. China's and Russia's new security outlook and jointly established security model make a clean break with Cold War logic and contrast sharply with the current direction of American strategy, which is to strengthen and enlarge the political and military alliances of the Cold War era.

Mutual benefit, joint development. Cooperation in trade, science, and technology is a third important theme of Sino-Russian partnership. In order to promote bilateral ties in these areas, the two countries have established a

⁵ "Wuguo yuanshou zai shanghai zhengshi qianshu zai bianjing diqu jiaqiang junshi lingyu xinren de xieding" (The Heads of Five States Have Signed an Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Border Area in Shanghai), *Renmin ribao*, Apr. 27, 1996.

mechanism of periodic meetings between their prime ministers as well as standing committees chaired by the deputy prime ministers which oversee trade, science and technology, energy, transportation, and military cooperation. Thus have China and Russia begun to exploit their geographical proximity in the interest of regional integration, demonstrating that the long-discussed “Northeast Asia economic sphere” and “economic common area” including China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are really not dreams, but working models of twenty-first-century regional cooperation with tremendous potential to become a new growth belt of the world economy. In addition, China and Russia are together designing a grand blueprint to develop the natural resources of Siberia and the Russian Far East that would draw in Japan and South Korea and link up with the resource bases of Central and Southeast Asia. Sino-Russian cooperation could thus promote not only bilateral economic development and prosperity, but the development of the entire Asia-Pacific regional economy.

Global multipolarity and a new world order. The fourth theme of Sino-Russian partnership is the joint pursuit of a multipolar, just, and rational international order, which is to say common opposition to the present (U.S.-dominated) “unipolar world.” Both countries want to use the five principles of peaceful coexistence and other officially recognized principles of international law as the foundation of a new international order, respect the free choice of each other’s people, treat large and small countries without exception equally, and oppose hegemonism and power politics.⁶ Both emphasize establishing a new universalist view of security beyond opposing military alliances and the use or threat of force. Both reject the use of “human rights” as an excuse to interfere in another country’s internal affairs. Both stress the need to adhere strictly to the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty signed in 1972 and oppose the deployment of destabilizing national or regional ABM systems. And both seek to strengthen the role of the United Nations and oppose attempts to use any other organization to replace it.

Regular summit meetings. The smooth development of Sino-Russian relations is a function of the fifth partnership theme: frequent summit meetings and continuous dialogue through various channels. From 1992 to 1999, the heads of state held seven summits, and the heads of government six. These regular meetings not only strengthen understanding and trust between leaders, but they also make possible joint contemplation of long-term strategic perspectives and goals.

Stable partnership for the long-term. The sixth principle of Sino-Russian relations stresses the duration and durability of partnership. This is no propaganda tactic, but a theme that derives from the permanent national interests of the two countries. In November 1997 at the fifth summit of top

⁶ The five principles are: to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity; not to invade each other; not to interfere in each other’s internal affairs; and to coexist peacefully.

leaders in Moscow, Jiang, quoting a Chinese maxim, said, “Close relatives, good neighbors—those are decisive for a country’s stability and peace.” Generations of Sino-Russian good neighborliness is not only the choice of the politicians of both countries, it is also the common desire of the peoples of the two countries.”⁷ President Yeltsin agreed that Sino-Russian ties “have a long-term strategic character, and are not influenced by temporary political factors.”⁸ Because China and Russia will both be concentrating on domestic reform and development for a long time to come, both require a peaceful, cooperative international environment, especially on their borders. They have no choice but to work together.

The Sino-Russian partnership will thus prove stable insofar as both nations work to build friendship between the two peoples over generations and resist the temptation to change course as a result of the domestic or international situation. At present the leaders repeatedly express their will to instill in their young people a tradition of friendship that can be passed on to future generations. The proof of the stability of the strategic partnership is that over the past eight years, despite constant changes in Russia’s domestic situation and great upheavals internationally, Sino-Russian relations have averted obstruction and progressed smoothly.

No alliance targeting a third country. The seventh and last element of the strategic partnership is its nature of self-protection, which is to say that Sino-Russian dialogue and consultations in the international arena do *not* indicate an imminent alliance forming against a third country. Indeed, Chinese and Russian leaders clearly assert that they reject all military alliances as relics of the Cold War. Thus, during the

Kosovo conflict the foreign ministers of China and Russia announced that the fundamental goal of their partnership was “to strive to establish a multipolar, just, and rational international order, to uphold world peace, stability, and security, and to spur the common development of each country.” Both sides restated their assertion that their nations do not intend to forge any military or political alliance against any other country or bloc, and stand “against the present tendency in the world for some regional military alliances to expand and strengthen.”⁹

On the one hand, China and Russia want to protect their respective national interests. On the other, in order to create a favorable international environment for domestic reform and development, both want to implement a comprehensive foreign policy, one of the primary goals of which is to

**Neither China
nor Russia
seeks an anti-
Western
alliance.**

⁷ “Jiang Zemin he Yeliqin huijian zhongwai jizhe” (Jiang and Yeltsin’s meeting with Chinese and foreign reporters), *Renmin ribao*, Nov. 11, 1997.

⁸ “Yeliqin zongtong jiejian jizhe” (Yeltsin’s interview with reporters), *Renmin ribao*, Nov. 8, 1997.

⁹ “Zhong e waizhang fabiao Beijing huiwu xinwen gongbao” (Chinese and Russian foreign ministers’ communiqué on the meeting in Beijing), *Renmin ribao*, June 3, 1999.

establish peaceful and cooperative relations with the developed Western countries, including the United States. In the early Yeltsin years, Moscow adopted a pro-Western foreign policy in hopes of joining the West's "civilized world community," hence there was no question of uniting with China against the West. Later in the 1990s, Russia implemented an independent great power diplomacy meant to promote "an equal partnership" with the West and not an anti-Western alliance with China. As Yeltsin declared, "Russia does not intend to oppose any international center of force, and also does not intend to depend one-sidedly on any center of force."¹⁰ China first established its independent and peaceful diplomatic posture early in the 1980s, stipulating that no alliance would be forged with any other great power or bloc. China's position regarding other world powers remains consistent with Deng Xiaoping's statement: "We are not afraid of anyone, but we also do not need to offend anyone."¹¹ Thus, neither China nor Russia considers an anti-Western alliance to be in its national interest, and their strategic partnership does not hinder the development of their relations with other countries, including the United States.

The U.S. Factor in Sino-Russian Relations

Despite the two countries' size and power, the relationship between China and Russia has always been swayed by other states with great influence on the continent. In the first half of the twentieth century, Japan had the most significant impact on Sino-Soviet relations, and since 1945 the United States has played the largest role. Therefore, one cannot analyze the prospects of the developing Sino-Russian relationship without assessing the influence of the United States and the triangular relations among the three powers.

The influence of the U.S. factor in Sino-Russian relations can be described as passing through three stages: 1949 to the late 1960s; the 1970s; and the 1980s and after. Following the end of World War II, the Soviet Union turned from America's ally into its Cold War rival. When China plunged into the civil war of 1945–49, however, the Soviet Union and United States both tilted toward the Kuomintang (Nationalist) government, the Americans out of anticommunism, and Stalin out of a desire to recover, under the Yalta agreement, the old Russian imperial presence in Manchuria and Mongolia. Moscow offered the Kuomintang its support in exchange for a Sino-Soviet treaty favorable to the Soviet Union. Thus, even as the Soviet Union professed solidarity with the Chinese Communists, it stood aloof from the civil war, no

¹⁰ "The Report of the President of the Russian Federation: On the issues concerning more security," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 14, 1996.

¹¹ "Shanyu zhuanzhu jiyu jiequ fazhan wenti" (Be good at grasping the opportunity to solve the problems of development), *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* (Deng Xiaoping's Collection) (Beijing: Renminchubun, 1993), vol. 3, p. 363.

doubt counting on the United States to prevent a Kuomintang defeat. Inasmuch as President Franklin D. Roosevelt brokered the Yalta accords, the United States actually helped the Soviet Union to realize its interests in China. The U.S. influence on Sino-Soviet relations at the time was therefore direct and multidimensional. In a certain sense, one can say that the United States was the backstage director of Sino-Soviet relations.

Overt American support of Chiang Kai-shek, however, obviously encouraged the Communist China of Mao Zedong to lean toward the Soviet Union after its triumph in 1949. The Soviet Union was obliged to honor Communist internationalism, name the United States the common threat and enemy, and sign a Sino-Soviet alliance in 1950. At the end of that decade, however, a split began to emerge between China and the Soviet Union. One of the causes was related to the attitudes of the two countries toward the United States. At that time the Soviet Union planned to ameliorate its relations with the United States and sought China's cooperation in this endeavor, asking Beijing to make concessions to the United States. China's leaders worried that the two superpowers might again unite to sell out China's interests. As a result, polemics arose between China and Russia over whether "peaceful coexistence" could become the "general diplomatic line" of a socialist country and how the "inherent qualities of imperialism" were to be understood. The United States closely followed the development of the Sino-Soviet contradictions and also, as the occasion demanded, prepared to seize an opportunity for an opening. By the end of the 1960s, relations between China and the Soviet Union had deteriorated to the point that armed clashes occurred on their border, and the two sides went to the brink of war. China now felt that the threat from the Soviet Union exceeded that from the United States. Under these circumstances Mao entertained President Richard Nixon's demarches, and the Sino-American rapprochement of 1972 left the Soviet Union the "odd man out" in the strategic triangle.

In 1982 Sino-Soviet relations began to shift from opposition to *détente*. This happened for many reasons, but the United States was an important factor. At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, Sino-American frictions became more numerous, especially over the Taiwan question. The Soviet Union took advantage of this situation and actively advocated improving Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese, recognizing their need for reform and openness, and hoping to gain more room for maneuver on the international stage, responded favorably to the Soviet proposal. From this time on, Sino-Soviet relations developed toward normalization even as the tacit Sino-American alliance gradually eroded.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, few barriers remained to the transformation of Sino-Russian relations into a partnership. The *raison d'être* of the Sino-American entente disappeared, and China's importance in America's foreign policy quickly receded. After the June 4, 1989, political waves in

Beijing,¹² the United States applied sanctions against China, used human rights questions to interfere in China's internal affairs, and violated China's sovereignty by increasing arms sales to Taiwan. Sino-American relations fell to their lowest point since before 1972.

The breakup of the Soviet Union, however, also eliminated the ideological opposition between Russia and the United States. Washington fully supported Russian efforts to carry out Western-style reforms. A "democratic faction" in Russia was filled with illusions about the Western alliance and interpreted talk of Russia's rapid admission to "Western civilization's world community" and a "European-Atlantic community from Vancouver to Vladivostok" as evidence that Russia could expect massive Marshall Plan-type assistance from the West. As Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said in April 1992:

As can easily be seen, Russia should step into the ranks of the most developed democratic states, to make it easy for us to occupy the position that history as well as geography gives us. . . . Our neighbors are the United States (across the Bering Straits), Japan, and the countries of Western Europe. With these countries we do not have any existing differences and conflicts of interest that cannot be overcome, while on the contrary there exist various possibilities with these countries to establish friendly relations and in the future to establish alliance relations. . . . The second emphasis, identical with the first in many respects, is to establish with bordering countries good neighborly relations. These are also the United States, Japan, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and, of course, the Commonwealth of Independent States. . . . South Korea is perhaps also such a neighbor.¹³

Among the emphases of Russian foreign policy at that time, there was no place for China at all.

But that very willingness to follow American direction, including the adoption of radical domestic reform scripted by U.S.-led international monetary organizations, did Russia serious harm. The United States did not respect Russia's interests, and its "sole superpower" dominance aroused the dissatisfaction of Russian leaders, who began to recognize that their one-sided policies toward the West were unproductive. Only by maintaining an equilibrium between East and West could Russian national interests be advanced. Hence, as early as 1992 Yeltsin noted "many mistakes and faults" in Russian foreign policy, among which was the lack of any "sustained, unremitting work launched toward Eastern countries."¹⁴ When Yeltsin visited China two months later, his offer to improve relations with China meshed well with China's own need to escape from the isolation it had suffered as a result of America's new anti-Chinese posture.

Since Yeltsin's first visit to China occurred before the post-Cold War

¹² The Tiananmen Square massacre (eds.).

¹³ Interview with Andrei Kozyrev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Apr. 11, 1992.

¹⁴ *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik* (issued by Russia's foreign ministry), Jan. 1993.

honeymoon between Russia and America had ended, the summit and joint communiqué issued by Chinese and Russian leaders did not touch on international questions. But in January 1994 Yeltsin sent a letter to Jiang Zemin proposing to elevate bilateral relations to the level of a constructive partnership. The joint declaration that followed the second Sino-Russian summit in September 1994 emphasized the two countries' desire "to strengthen cooperation in international affairs," and "to oppose hegemonism and power politics . . . [and] political, military, and economic groupings."¹⁵ Hegemonism obviously referred to the United States, while the political and military groupings in question were NATO and the U.S.-Japan alliance.

In the years 1993–94, Russo-American contradictions were more and more obtrusive. In the first half of 1993, NATO, under American pressure, formally expressed its desire to absorb former Warsaw Pact countries, which Moscow perceived as a plot "to drive Russia out of Europe." By the end of 1994, despite vehement Russian opposition, NATO had set a timetable for the admission of three East European countries. In the region of the former Soviet Union itself, the United States spared no effort to hinder the process of integration in the CIS. The Clinton administration publicly opposed any "special rights" for Russia within the commonwealth, warned Russia that it must not establish a "sphere of influence" beyond its borders, and lent increasing support to the other CIS members—especially those with serious disputes with Russia. At the same time, frictions arose between Russia and the United States over the former Yugoslavia and other international problems, and the United States continued to apply discriminatory policies on trade and technology exports. As a result, Yeltsin decided to raise Sino-Russian relations to a new level, and Russian scholars assessed the development of those relations in this way: "The significance of China . . . for Russia's future is not easy to doubt. Under circumstances where it has to lose its illusions toward the West and competition with the United States will very possibly grow more intense, Russia must forge contacts with China."¹⁶

China's response to Russia's proposal took some time because Sino-American relations were in flux. In 1993–94 China and the United States restored dialogue in various areas, and economic and trade relations developed without interruption, but their differences on human rights and the Taiwan question were still acute. As seen by Chinese, the Clinton administration continued to pursue "westernization and fragmentation" policies toward China, perhaps hoping that China would experience the same sort of implosion that destroyed the Soviet Union. But by 1995, when China's social and political stability and vigorous economic development became undeni-

**American
policy
presented
Russia and
China with the
same dilemma.**

¹⁵ *Kua shiji de zhanlue xuanze* (The choices beyond the centuries) (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1999), p. 15.

¹⁶ E. Zanev, "Trump card" (in Russian), *Pravda*, 1994, no. 22, p. 3.

able, some Americans recklessly began to propound theories of a “China threat.”

In 1995–96 the Russians more clearly recognized that the promise of large-scale economic assistance and true “strategic partnership” with the United States was to a very great degree an illusion. The United States on the one hand strove to support Russia’s market reform and democratization process, and on the other tended to view Russia as a latent threat that should be mitigated through an expansion of NATO. Towards China, the United States favored “comprehensive engagement,” but also decried a latent threat that should be contained by strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. American foreign policy thus presented Russia and China with the same strategic dilemma. In March 1995 Jiang Zemin met with the visiting Russian foreign minister and noted their countries’ common interest in “opposing hegemonism and supporting the direction of world peace.”¹⁷ Yeltsin recognized that “Russia and China are two great powers that shoulder a special responsibility for the fate of the world. Both countries oppose power politics, oppose one country imposing its will on other countries.”¹⁸ That was the background to the Sino-Russian decision of April 1996 to elevate their bilateral relations to the level of a strategic partnership.

In 1997 the leaders of China, Russia, the United States, Japan, and other world powers attended a series of summits, raising hopes that they would establish a foundation of equality, trust, and respect for all nations’ interests. But the 1999 NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia and the revelation of NATO’s “new strategy” brought about a sharp reversal in great power relations. The air strikes and bombing of the Chinese embassy aroused in Russia and China an outpouring of anti-American sentiment, causing many people to wonder if, as a result of the strife in Chechnya or the Taiwan question, for example, their own countries might someday receive the same kind of treatment NATO dealt out to Yugoslavia. So the Kosovo war covered Sino-American and Russo-American relations with a thick cloud, and China and Russia huddled together against the threat of storm.

In sum, it can be clearly discerned that in the wake of the Cold War Russia was eager to establish a comprehensive strategic relationship with the United States. But after 1994 the accelerated development of contradictions in the Russo-American relationship called the Sino-Russian strategic partnership into existence. As the Russian scholar A. Ivanov observed, “If the Soviet superpower has disappeared from the international stage, the influence of Sino-U.S.-Russian triangular relations on the balance of power in the entire world has still not disappeared.”¹⁹

Between Russia and the United States there exist deep contradictions

¹⁷ “Jiang Zemin’s Meeting with A. Kozyrev” (in Chinese), *Renmin ribao*, Mar. 3, 1995.

¹⁸ “Yeltsin Highly Values Sino-Russian Summit” (in Chinese), *Renmin ribao*, Apr. 26, 1996.

¹⁹ A. Ivanov, “Retreat to the East” (in Russian), *Novoe Vremya*, Apr. 13, 1996.

that will be difficult to overcome in the short term. Russia favors a multipolar world, while the United States evidently does its utmost to establish a unipolar world under its leadership. Russia favors establishing an all-European security system in which each country of Europe participates equally, while the United States favors a system dominated by a U.S.-led NATO. Russia energetically seeks to maintain the nuclear balance formed between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War, while the United States plans to upset the existing balance through missile defense systems and thus achieve unilateral superiority. Russia energetically seeks renewed integration with the other CIS countries, while the United States does its utmost to hinder CIS integration in order to prevent the restoration of a Soviet or Russian empire.

Likewise, Sino-American relations, despite intermittent improvement, reveal basic contradictions that will not be possible to overcome in the short term. China is determined to take its own modernization path based on socialism with Chinese characteristics, while the United States continuously uses human rights and democracy as excuses to interfere in China's internal affairs and (as Chinese see it) to foment instability. China energetically seeks to bring about Taiwan's return at an early date in the name of Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, while the United States uses every ruse to impede this course. Washington not only regards Taiwan as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier," but apparently means to contain China and prevent it from strengthening. China advocates setting up a new security viewpoint in the Asia-Pacific region through consultations, dialogue, and cooperation with neighboring countries in order to resolve contradictions, avoid conflict, and oppose Cold War logic. But the United States is strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance established in the Cold War period and cooperates with Japan to develop and deploy a regional antiballistic missile system. Washington claims this system is needed to counter North Korea, but Chinese perceive that the real target is China.

In Sino-Russian relations, by contrast, no major contradictions exist anymore. As Russia's first deputy foreign minister, A. Adamishin, wrote in 1994, "With Europe, the U.S., and Asia, a strategic equilibrium corresponds to Russia's interest. No matter how Russia's relations with the West change, a constructive partnership with China corresponds to Russia's interests."²⁰ Russia's deputy head of Asia-Pacific affairs, A. Panov, spoke even more frankly: "The stronger our position in the East, the more confident and weightily we can pick our moves in the West."²¹ As for China, long-term, stable, and warm relations with Russia are also imperative because the maintenance of peace and tranquility on China's northern and western border alone will enable

²⁰ A. Adamishin, "Can We Reach a Consensus Concerning Foreign Policy?" (in Russian), *Moskovskie Novosti*, Apr. 26, 1996.

²¹ TASS (Moscow), Oct. 15, 1994.

China to direct its attention and resources to domestic modernization and address possible security challenges from the east and south.

That said, it is crucial to recognize that the Sino-Russian-U.S. triangular relations of the present period differ from those of the 1970s. At that time China and the United States united to oppose the Soviet Union in comparatively simple fashion, whereas the present triangle is more intricate and complex. To be sure, China and Russia, in opposing U.S. hegemonism, have common interests and identical or similar standpoints. But with respect to economic, scientific, technological, and cultural interaction, Sino-U.S. ties greatly surpass Sino-Russian ties, and Russo-U.S. relations in many regards exceed Sino-Russian relations. Therefore, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership is different from both the 1950s Sino-Soviet alliance aimed against the United States and the 1970s Sino-U.S. alliance aimed against the Soviet Union. Currently, U.S. relations with both Russia and China are not confrontational and contain an element of cooperation.

As for the question of whether the Sino-Russian strategic partnership might develop into an anti-American alliance, only the United States can bring about such an outcome. China and Russia both desire to concentrate on domestic reform, which requires a favorable international environment and above all peaceful and cooperative relations with developed countries such as the United States. As Russian president Vladimir Putin declared: “[W]e should recognize that domestic goals are above foreign goals. . . . We should be clear: our world position, our level of prosperity, and our overall authority are determined by whether we can succeed in resolving our internal problems.”²² China and Russia both understand that to attract the capital and technology needed to modernize, they cannot become the most-favored partner of one another to the exclusion of the developed nations. Hence, Russia does all that it can to establish an “equal partnership” with the United States, and China does its utmost to establish a “constructive strategic partnership” with the United States. Finally, the United States itself, however much it prepares for the day, fifteen or twenty years from now, when China or Russia may become a “menace,” has not at present named China and Russia enemies and continues to pursue engagement. Under these circumstances, China and Russia have no need to forge an alliance against the United States.

Conclusions

The Sino-Russian strategic partnership is not in essence an alliance, but a long-term, stable, mutually cooperative relationship based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. One could say that the 1990s were the

²² V. Putin, “An Open Letter to Voters” (in Russian), *Izvestia*, Feb. 5, 2000.

best period in the history of bilateral relations. The strategic partnership excludes ideological elements and Cold War logic. In this sense, Sino-Russian relations surpass the level of development of U.S. relations with either country. In the past eight years, Sino-Russian relations have developed smoothly, but problems and challenges persist. For example, bilateral economic and commercial relations remain in a backward condition and could eventually undermine the foundation of the bilateral strategic partnership. In addition, due to the two countries' long and unhappy history, kernels of mutual distrust survive in certain quarters, especially in Russia.

After the Cold War, great power relations entered a period of profound adjustment that is far from over. Unlike the Cold War era, great power relations today contain elements of competition and cooperation. Although no great power openly views any other as an enemy to oppose or contain, each nonetheless perceives others as latent opponents and remains on guard. The great powers continuously adjust their own policies, striving to keep a balance and place themselves in the most beneficial position.

Finally, the current era is defined by two conflicting characteristics that affect the adjustment of great power relations. One is the persistence of the logic and instruments of force of the Cold War; the other, the globalization of the world economy. The first retards great power relations, while the influence of the second is not yet fully revealed. There is no doubt, however, that the second force is the stronger and can over time wield a more profound influence on international relations. Therein lies the reason to have an optimistic attitude toward the development of great power relations and the future of the world.



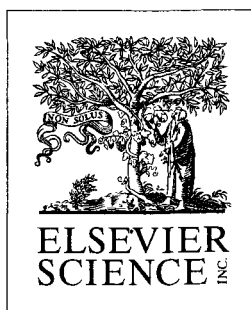
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A New Sino-Russian-American Triangle?

by Gilbert Rozman

Americans have generally reacted to the rhetoric of Sino-Russian summit communiqués and official discourse by either casually dismissing it as out of touch with reality or expressing alarm that it means a revival of an “enemy” image by hardliners who have resurfaced.¹ Little thought is given to the substance of the arguments about the evolution of the system of great powers. In his paper, Li Jingjie articulately summarizes that substance, emphasizing the reemergence of the strategic triangle. By carefully examining his arguments and responding to them, we can appreciate the challenge of communicating with Chinese and Russians who accept the logic of a new strategic triangle. These issues matter as we move beyond the simplistic dichotomy of “unipolar globalization” and “multipolar equality of great powers.”

Li is absolutely correct to say that at the top level Sino-Russian relations have advanced remarkably smoothly over eight years. This does not, of course, mean that when an agreement is reached, such as on expanding trade to \$20 billion by the year 2000, both sides are committed to putting it into effect. But it does indicate that top leaders are determined to make this a solid partnership in a perilous world. They will go to great lengths not to jeopardize this relationship, and indeed Sino-Russian relations are likely to stay close and even to grow stronger over the coming decade.

Along with many other Chinese and Russian analysts, however, Li leaves largely unexamined the consequences of fragile relations between the two countries beyond geopolitical consensus. To be sure, he is careful to warn that if economic and trade ties are not bolstered, the strategic partnership will be difficult to maintain, and he acknowledges forces, especially

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Inter-University Study Group on the United States and China on May 1, 2000.

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inside Russia, that continue to be suspicious of the other country. But he devotes little space to the unbalanced nature of the relationship.² It is in fact likely that Sino-Russian ties will be increasingly tested in the absence, for the foreseeable future, of a wide-ranging foundation. It is worth considering what some of the tests ahead may be and how they may strain bilateral ties even if they are unlikely to undermine the strategic partnership itself.

In a sharp departure from what was said in China before 1999, Li does not rule out the possibility that Sino-Russian ties could turn into an alliance, although neither side currently has that intention. Drawing on his logic, I discuss conditions that might lead in that direction. A change in tone in China suggests a significant shift toward pessimism over Sino-U.S. relations, despite Li's claim of cautious optimism at the end of his paper. Passage of START II and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the Russian parliament likely marks the beginning of a campaign to pressure the United States to accelerate arms control rather than develop new missile defenses. Depending on the American response, this may intensify criticisms of "hegemonism" and bring Moscow and Beijing closer together. Although his formal term as president of Russia had barely begun when this paper was written, the "Putin effect" needs to be considered as well with regard to Sino-Russian relations.

Finally, the whole question of a strategic triangle including the United States deserves close scrutiny. While Chinese in 1997–98 were often writing about triangles of great powers in which there would be a mixture of competition and cooperation, clearly the idea of a strategic triangle harkens back to the Cold War years.³ Despite Li's assurances that the meaning is different from that era, revival of the concept cannot but remind us of what we hoped we had left behind. Hence the need to assess the reasoning behind the strategic triangle and weigh the validity of its assumptions. To do so, we need to look beyond Li's paper to interpret the principles of the three bilateral relations within the triangle and above all to pinpoint what drives China and Russia together and how enduring it is.

Although in the 1990s it has not escaped notice that relations at the top between Moscow and Beijing have steadily improved, observers have found these ties rather uninteresting: rhetoric attracts attention but yields little of substance. Thus, one summit after another repeats essentially the same one-sided complaints about the United States and exaggerated claims of cooperation while—apart from decisions about new weapons purchases—linkages between the two countries scarcely seem to be moving forward. Hence, Zbigniew Brzezinski, for one, strongly disputes the viability of a strong, strategic bond between China and Russia, and Sherman Garnett and some of his Russian co-contributors have emphasized how "limited" the

² Gilbert Rozman, "Sino-Russian Relations in the 1990s: A Balance Sheet," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Spring 1998, pp. 93–113.

³ Gilbert Rozman, "China's Quest for a Great Power Identity," *Orbis*, Summer 1999, pp. 383–402.

partnership is between the two.⁴ In my own contributions to that volume, however, I argued that we should not be so quick to dismiss these ties, and would do so more firmly today.

Looking back for the lessons of the past half-century, one can discern powerful momentum for continued reconciliation. In addition, focusing on the likely pattern of great power relations in the decade ahead and taking due cognizance of some aspects of globalization in each country, one can foresee a temptation for the leaders to identify national interests in ways that give the two countries a common agenda. Even the worldviews of China and Russia, in which great power balances figure prominently, can have important consequences. If Chinese and Russian leaders believe in the strategic triangle with the United States and act in accordance with this logic, this alone will play a role in shaping relations, even if it is not enough to make such a triangle a reality.

When Beijing and Moscow Look Back at Lost Opportunities

At the beginning of the 1980s, Chinese and Soviet analysts were both looking back over two decades of lost opportunities. Chinese criticisms of the period of “Cultural Revolution” were wide ranging, but the Soviet Union figured prominently in many of the discussions dealing with ideology, economics, politics, and even social policies.⁵ By damning the Soviet Union as revisionist and preaching class struggle against indigenous elements that presumably could lead China in the same direction, the Chinese leadership had allowed ideology to interfere with its policy options. By responding to the Soviet military threat with forced diversion of resources on a massive scale, including the relocation of industrial enterprises far inland to less accessible and often mountainous areas, China had paid a huge price in economic growth. Citing the need to avoid the kind of political transition that had occurred in Moscow, the leaders in Beijing also permitted the Red Guards and the “Gang of Four” to usurp power, and preempted such revisionist Soviet policies as wage incentives through ever more radical social policies. All in all, because of its obsession with the Soviet Union, China squandered the chance to build effectively on the gains achieved before the Great Leap Forward.

Soviet reexamination of the costs of its China policy occurred in

⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 115–18; Sherman Garnett, “Limited Partnership,” in *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. Sherman Garnett (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), p. 5.

⁵ Gilbert Rozman, “China’s Soviet Watchers in the 1980s: A New Era in Scholarship,” *World Politics*, July 1985, pp. 435–74; Gilbert Rozman, *The Chinese Debate about Soviet Socialism 1978–1985* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

stages. Before the start of talks on normalization in 1982, voices of reform could only hint indirectly that serious mistakes were being made, but the issues were strongly felt.⁶ With each twist in development since that time, the regrets have mounted. Not only had Moscow failed to take steps that could have spared it years of confrontation with China that drove it further away from reform and cost it heavily in the militarization of Siberia and the Russian Far East, but it had also sacrificed a chance to maintain a balance with the United States and maximize its superpower interests elsewhere. Whether it had taken a softer stand towards Beijing in 1960, 1969, 1976, 1982, 1985, or even 1992, its global options might have turned out very differently. Few would disagree with the lesson that Moscow must not allow relatively minor differences with China to weaken it vis-à-vis the United States.

Instead of harboring resentment against each other for the era of the Sino-Soviet split, Chinese and Russian leaders and elites share a mindset of regret and a determination not to make the same mistake again. This sentiment is evident in recent writings in each country, including the memoirs of Wu Lingxi covering the decade 1956–66.⁷ Given the virtual certainty of pronounced tensions with the United States in the coming decade, both countries will do all they can to maintain their bilateral ties and have already agreed on a set of principles that serve this objective. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to treat the worldview of Vladimir Putin and the military and security veterans that have risen to high leadership posts with him as close in spirit to the thinking of Boris Yeltsin and the new guard of reformers at the dawn of the Russian Federation. In a way, the shifting outlook on the past resembles what occurred in China after its triple blows: the Tiananmen movement against the Communist political system; the Soviet defeat in the Cold War and the collapse of communism around the world; and the breakup of the Soviet Union, initially accompanied by a pro-Western slant in the foreign policy of the new Russia. As in China, leaders in Russia recognized that their country had suffered enormous international losses, that the United States now threatened it in new ways, and that a failure to bolster ties with the other Communist power had played a big role in this outcome. Much more than Yeltsin, Putin might be expected to keep his mind fixed on these lessons and on what can be done to learn from them.

The Principles of Sino-Russian Relations

The best way to view the principles set forth in joint communiqués is to recognize their value in preventing anything from casting doubt on the

⁶ Gilbert Rozman, "Moscow's China-Watchers in the Post-Mao Era: The Response to a Changing China," *The China Quarterly*, June 1983, pp. 15–41; Gilbert Rozman, *A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet Criticisms of China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁷ Wu Lingxi, *Shinian lunzhan* (Ten-year Polemics), 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyong wenxian chubanshe, 1999).

Sino-Russian partnership. They provide a safety net for a relationship that lacks many close bilateral linkages. We need to take a closer look at the key concepts in order to understand how they operate.

Li Jingjie follows a long tradition of analysts in China and other countries in relying on government documents and sources to characterize foreign relations. He gives us the official interpretation of the key concepts used by leaders to characterize relations. While in some cases this may offer a corrective to outside observers who skeptically dismiss such pronouncements on the assumption that they contain little substance, it does not take into account the literature that is critical of official claims or exposes the underside of relations. What do these principles for Sino-Russian relations really mean, and how realistic are they?

To begin with, what in practice is “mutual respect?” As used in the official rhetoric, it smacks of Cold War-era censorship and propagandistic approaches to news. It might be a formalistic way of asserting that “no matter how offensive the other side’s actions, our side will report them uncritically or ignore them” (for example, Chinese news coverage of Russian conduct in Chechnya). It also suggests that, regardless of their seriousness, problems between two countries will be voiced only in private or indirectly in order to minimize the risk of arousing discontent at home or awareness abroad. When local Russian leaders and media stirred fears of a Chinese threat posed by immigration, quiet expansionism, deleterious trade, and so forth in 1994–95, the Chinese were slow to report it. Clearly the Russians, with their newly vibrant democratic press and rival candidates tempted by demagoguery, had not yet grasped the meaning of “mutual respect.” But at least Russia’s national leadership has understood, and as the Russian media have toned down their criticisms of China in favor of more alluring targets in the West, the Chinese can see signs of growing “mutual respect.”

Such doubts about the misuse of the idea of “mutual respect” should not lead us to belittle the principle of national leaders’ striving for ways to show proper respect for the symbols of another country’s sovereignty. Where such respect is not shown, particularly in East Asian nations long accustomed to the symbols of human relations and saving face, efforts should be made to identify and correct the problem. But at the height of the “information age” and at a time of democratization and persistent struggles for power between different branches of government and political parties, there is a danger that “mutual respect” will become a tool for reversion to a bygone era characterized by Cold War sensitivities.

During the years of the Sino-Soviet dispute, commentary in each country on the other proceeded from unqualified praise to omissions that hinted at reservations to indirect criticisms using surrogate targets in other countries to harsh and direct criticisms and finally to sustained diatribes. The very act of open criticism was deemed one of the offenses contributing to the split and the delay in healing it. O. B. Rakhmanin, the highest Soviet official

in charge of relations with China, kept an annual score of the number of criticisms of the Soviet Union published in China.⁸ In 1982 talks on normalization also brought a freeze on open criticisms. This is the background for current sensitivities about “mutual respect.”

The shadow of U.S. relations with both China and Russia will continue to color perceptions between the latter two. As long as the populations of both countries remain preoccupied with the idea that the United States is humiliating them, pressuring them unfairly, telling them what to do, and damaging their prestige through open criticism, then the strategic partners will not have to raise sensitive internal issues in their bilateral discussions. Domestic troubles would have to take center stage in some new manner if the public is to appreciate the value of constructive criticism from the outside. Media and public officials would then face the daunting task of assessing their counterpart's national sensitivities and tailoring advice to win a favorable response. Russia and China may find it difficult to critique each other since their memories of the Communist rhetoric of the past could make it hard to reach beyond silence to advice.

Next, what exactly does “equality” mean? China and Russia have no problem accepting their veto power in the Security Council, a glaring example of their being “more equal than others.” Rather, when they refer to equality they mean noninterference in the affairs of other states, both in words and in deeds. Carried to an extreme, this could justify silence in the face of Stalin's bloody purges of millions and the terror of the Cultural Revolution, and exclude the presence of morality in foreign relations. Yet, neither Moscow nor Beijing really abides by such a limitation. One of Russia's principal foreign concerns is the treatment of the Russian diaspora in the former Soviet republics, and the Russian government and people have no intention of being silent on this matter. Meanwhile, China has made the moral inferiority and nationalistic potential of Japan a mainstay of its policy toward that country, so much so that Jiang Zemin's November 1998 visit to Japan was dominated by criticisms of Japan's treatment of history.⁹

Given the enormous inequality of resources in our world, great inequalities are bound to exist in foreign relations and will inevitably be relevant in the face of perceived threats. As long as what happens inside a country has consequences abroad—corruption leads to squandered international assistance, repression of ethnic and religious minorities spills across national borders, economic mismanagement sends refugees flooding into neighboring countries, acid rain and nuclear accidents cause widespread environmental damage, and weapons of mass destruction spread to those who may use them for blackmail or revenge—nations have no choice but to

⁸ See the annual volumes of *Opasnyi kurs* (Dangerous Course), 1–11 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970–81).

⁹ Kokubun Ryosei, “Shuno gaiko to Chugoku” (Summit Diplomacy and China), *Kokusai mondai*, no. 1, 1999, pp. 2–17.

criticize their neighbors and insist on their adherence to recognized standards of behavior. For at least a decade, Chinese sources have drawn an artificial distinction between their positive assessment of global economic integration and negative treatment of most other forms of globalization. The concept of equality is used to bolster this negativism.

The idea of equality among great powers was reinforced by the nuclear standoff between the United States and the USSR. The Cold War's division of much of the world into two blocs with roughly equal capacity to annihilate each other reinforced European diplomatic traditions of equality. Even as those traditions are retained for many purposes, we need to recognize the consequences of the worldwide shift away from equality. Japan's efforts to block China's nuclear tests in the mid-1990s by threatening to withhold Overseas Development Assistance may have seemed to China an unfair exploitation of inequality, but that sort of inequality is only likely to grow. Given the explosion of interdependence around the world, the Chinese should refocus their notion of equality: rather than rejecting collective responses, they should cooperate in the setting of rules for such action.

It will not be easy in the years ahead to reconcile the traditional assumption of equality among sovereign states with either the enormous inequalities in actual power and resources or the urgent need to address global problems. Beijing and Moscow are correct to point to the danger that Washington will recklessly alienate other states in the interest of expedient resolutions. Washington in turn has good reason to worry that Beijing and Moscow will use inequalities in resources and power as an excuse for irresponsibly hampering steps toward a safer future. This clash of perspectives is not likely to ease soon.

Beijing and Moscow have also affirmed the need for a "new security outlook and model," and over the next decade it is unlikely that they will diverge much from this common understanding. In 1996 they agreed that the world does not need U.S.-centered alliances such as NATO, much less the expansion of such groupings. In 1999 China and Russia were thrown closer together by NATO's war in Yugoslavia. In April 2000, following Russian ratification of START II, the two countries both resisted unilateral U.S. modification of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty. If the United States proceeds, this will likely drive them closer together. If Russia were to succeed in negotiations to set limits on American deployment of defensive missiles, it might lead to some resentment in China, but a more likely result is an increased awareness of the goals that could be realized through cooperative efforts. We can anticipate continued agreement between the two on the need for a new security outlook different from that of the United States, and cooperation to identify what that outlook is and how it can be achieved.

The goal of "mutual benefit and joint development" raises questions

**Bilateralism
might threaten
Sino-Russian
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a regional
framework
would.**

about the degree to which Sino-Russian relations can develop on their own. As Russian industry and technology fall further and further behind global standards and Chinese entrepreneurship keeps its sights fixed on leapfrogging into the newest sectors of a rapidly changing global economy, the prospects for cooperation decline. For some time to come, weapons sales and transfer of production rights will remain advantageous for China. Beyond that, Russia faces a difficult choice that could reshape bilateral relations: whether to open Siberia for massive development of energy and other resources on terms that are acceptable to the West and likely to involve large numbers of Chinese workers within a multilateral framework, or to expand recently established partnerships between Russian regions and Chinese provinces to allow Chinese firms to gain a major foothold through bilateral rebuilding of Russian industry and commerce. Either way, deep resentments, criminal abuse, and police harassment of Chinese could damage the strategic partnership. Ironically, economic bilateralism might well threaten Sino-Russian ties more than a regional framework would.

To maximize mutual benefit and joint development in economic spheres, Moscow and Beijing should be stressing the roles of the United States, Europe, and Japan. Instead, Russians assert that the United States wants to keep Russia down economically, and Chinese repeat this charge instead of urging Russia to emulate their own open-door policies. Their joint communiqués speak of advancing world multipolarity and systematizing high-level summits, but they omit the hard decisions that each side must take to achieve regional development that would bring them closer together.¹⁰ When such choices are made, as they must be sooner or later, they could put Sino-Russian relations in a new context and diminish the prospects for a strategic triangle. However, Putin's likely strategy of balancing new forms of economic openness with tightened central control could heighten the sense that Beijing and Moscow share a common approach.

Possible Tests for Sino-Russian Relations

Over each of the past five decades, triangular relations between Russia, China, and the United States have defied expectations. They may do so again over the next ten years. Contrary to the prevailing assumption to the effect that Sino-Russian ties will grow no stronger and probably weaken somewhat, they may in fact strengthen. One possibility is that these ties evolve into an alliance or grow strong enough to justify treating trilateral relations as a strategic triangle once more. Alternatively, Sino-Russian ties could weaken, even as one or the other forges a closer relationship with the

¹⁰ Gilbert Rozman, "Flawed Regionalism: Reconceptualizing Northeast Asia in the 1990s," *Pacific Review*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1998), pp. 1–27; Gilbert Rozman, "Restarting Regionalism in Northeast Asia," *North Pacific Policy Papers*, no. 1 (Vancouver: Program on Canada-Asia Policy Studies, Institute of Asian Research, 2000), pp. 2–21.

United States. What troubles could trigger such an outcome? Four lines of development could do so: 1) a sharp domestic shift in either country invigorating reform and encouraging a foreign policy favorable to the United States; 2) a breakdown in bilateral relations resulting from direct contacts between China and Russia; 3) a dramatic change in the regional situation that elicits sharply divergent reactions from the two countries; and 4) a breakthrough between either Moscow or Beijing and Washington on an issue of fundamental importance, such as NATO and security in Europe or Taiwan and security in Asia. Although none of these developments is likely to occur in the near future, each deserves a brief discussion.

In China, President Jiang Zemin has consolidated power since Deng Xiaoping chose him to lead the party and the country. In 1998–2000 pressure on Jiang's leadership has come primarily from forces suspicious of the United States and the emergence of a civil society, whether the military-industrial elites, the state sector dealing with unemployed and dispirited workers, or inland provincial administrations that have fallen behind in development. While long-term change, including entry into the World Trade Organization, favors reform and the emergence of civil society, there is little sign that in the next decade a reform coalition could rise to power and adopt a pro-U.S. foreign policy. In Russia, President Vladimir Putin has rapidly consolidated power in a short time. As election results in December 1999 and March 2000 indicate, pressure on him comes overwhelmingly from Communists, nationalistic regional administrations, and oligarchs inclined toward protectionism. Given his strong ties to security forces and the military inside Russia, Putin is unlikely to soften his approach to Washington. Thus, the respective domestic situations offer little hope in the short term for a turn toward the United States at the expense of the Sino-Russian partnership.

In 1994, troubles in Sino-Russian relations did require attention from top leaders.¹¹ As late as 1997 Evgenii Nazdratenko, the governor of Primorskii Krai, was campaigning energetically to stop the completion of the border demarcation.¹² In the heyday of cross-border fever, Chinese shuttle traders often cheated Russian consumers, but controls are now in place to limit such behavior. Likewise, Russians have continued to harass Chinese residents and visitors, but as Russian confidence begins to return, that is likely to happen less frequently. Having already successfully confronted many challenges to bilateral relations, the countries are not likely to face a more serious threat. Leaders are sensitive to the need to deal with each other, and even in the

¹¹ Gilbert Rozman, "Troubled Choices for the Russian Far East: Decentralization, Open Regionalism, and Internationalism," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Summer/Fall 1997, pp. 37–69; Gilbert Rozman, "Turning Fortresses into Free Trade Zones," in *Rapprochement or Rivalry?* pp. 177–202.

¹² "Nekotorye problemy demarkatsii rossiisko-kitaiskoi granitsy 1991–1997 g.g.: sbornik statei i dokumentov" (Some problems of the demarcation of the Russo-Chinese border 1991–1997: A collection of articles and documents) (Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1997).

Russian Far East the mood towards China has softened, despite lingering fears. The public has grown accustomed to the reality of day-to-day contacts, if not enamored of them. Above all, a consensus exists that when problems arise they must be contained.

Regional issues could be the soft spot in Sino-Russian relations during the next decade. In the past seven years the two countries essentially agreed on a number of issues: containment of Islamic fundamentalism and support of existing administrations in Central Asia; resistance to U.S. pressure on North Korea and quiet urging of gradual reforms that could lead Pyongyang to a soft landing; and criticism of Japan for not doing enough to support regionalism. Yet, changes on all three fronts could be substantial in coming years. Japan has already spent three years wooing Russia and winning some concessions, such as acceptance of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and support for Japan's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, that reveal a lack of coordination between Moscow and Beijing. If Japan can, against the odds, reach an agreement on a peace treaty with Russia, which would require a formula for dealing with the four disputed islands, it

The United States cannot use economic incentives alone to realize geopolitical objectives.

could forge an independent foreign policy that would call into question some assumptions of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership.¹³ After all, China seeks to treat the U.S.-Japan alliance in Asia as the equivalent of NATO in Europe. At present, however, Japan appears intent on gaining residual sovereignty over all of the islands before signing a peace treaty, and Russia shows no inclination to agree. Although no breakthrough is in sight, an interim arrangement would at least keep alive the prospect of an eventual solution.

Troubles are mounting in Central Asia as governments there become more repressive and economic development grows more problematic. Nearby Afghanistan could become an exporter of Islamic-inspired violence. If large-scale conflict erupted beyond the confines of Tajikistan, it could pose a challenge to Sino-Russian relations, especially if Moscow seized the opportunity to shore up its influence in the region. Still, in the near future the most likely response to trouble would be Chinese support for a Russian reassertion of power. For the time being, Central Asia is not driving China and Russia apart, as some had expected, but bringing them closer together.¹⁴

Finally, there is the suddenly changing situation on the Korean peninsula. As long as North Korea remains under old-style communist control

¹³ Gilbert Rozman, ed., *Japan and Russia: The Tortuous Path to Normalization 1949–1999* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Stephen J. Blank and Alvin Z. Rubinstein, eds., *Imperial Decline: Russia's Changing Role in Asia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

and limits the pace of change, China and Russia can be expected to continue to give it diplomatic backing while expanding economic ties with South Korea. After the secret visit to Beijing of Kim Jong-il, his historic summit in June 2000 in Pyongyang with Kim Dae-jung, and the planned visit of Vladimir Putin to Pyongyang a month later, Beijing's and Moscow's interests on the Korean peninsula will probably converge. A major disagreement could arise only if the situation changed abruptly, sparking wide-ranging debate about what kind of Korean unification should occur. As in the case of the other regional issues, potential trouble should not be equated with a serious short-term threat to strong Sino-Russian ties.

Of course, the United States has the greatest capacity to influence Moscow or Beijing in a way that could weaken Sino-Russian ties, even though there is no reason to think it will pay the price to do so. On the contrary, many in Congress would unilaterally press forward on NATO expansion, national or theater missile defense, and the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act. Few members speak of any need to reassure China or Russia, let alone compromise in order to improve relations substantially. Hardly anyone in the United States takes the idea of a strategic triangle seriously because there is little acceptance of the reasonableness of Chinese or Russian grievances and little expectation that the power of either country will soon pose a serious challenge to the United States. Americans are focused on high finance and high technology, neither of which is associated with China or Russia, despite concerns about China's rising regional military and economic power and Russia's strategic arsenal. Given the moral righteousness of American thinking and the lack of urgency about China's and Russia's comprehensive national power, it is hard to imagine that any U.S. leadership will produce a breakthrough in relations with either country over the next five to ten years. That is not to say that there will not be many efforts to manage problems in relations, as there have been in recent years, but these are likely to be short-term responses to crises rather than components of a long-term foreign policy strategy. Even if such a strategy were to be adopted, the differences between the United States, on the one side, and China and Russia, on the other, would be very difficult to bridge. One must not be persuaded by the idea that the United States and its allies can use economic incentives alone to realize geopolitical objectives.

However often the Sino-Russian relationship is tested over the next decade, we should not expect that it will change significantly. It may be "fragile" in most conventional respects such as economic and cultural ties, but it is not impulsive or tactical. Moreover, it has become somewhat institutionalized through new mechanisms little noticed in the outside world. An elaborate process now exists for planning top-level meetings, and Li Jingjie is correct to find the partnership rooted in national interests that are widely accepted in both countries.

What Would a Strategic Triangle Require?

In the 1950s and 1960s it was customary to view the world as polarized by the two superpowers into two blocs of countries. Although Lowell Dittmer in 1990 applied the notion of a strategic triangle to U.S.-Soviet-Chinese relations even prior to the Communist revolution in 1949, China lacked the power properly to be considered a balancing force to the superpowers until 1970, despite its intervention in the Korean War early in 1950 and aggressive threats to the offshore islands held by Taiwan at the end of the decade. Only when China had developed nuclear weapons after 1964 and emerged from the anarchic and inward-oriented phase of the Cultural Revolution after 1969 did it rise, arguably, to the level of a global balancing force. In the 1970s and 1980s China was indeed considered to be part of a "strategic triangle" for four reasons. First, the military power of the other two sides was perceived as approximately in equilibrium, lending weight to a third party's capacity to tip the balance. Next, the United States from the time of Henry Kissinger so appreciated China's decision to oppose the Soviet Union that the United States bestowed a high status on China as if it were on par with (or at least not far behind) the superpowers within a triangular framework. Thirdly, Soviet analysts embraced the idea of a strategic triangle after relations with China began to normalize relations and China distanced itself from the United States in 1982. Finally, military power, especially nuclear weapons and missiles, weighed most heavily in calculations of the balance of power until the end of the Cold War. When Lowell Dittmer's book on the history of Sino-Soviet relations from 1945 to 1990 appeared, it stood as a summary of the situation to that point and seemed to bring closure to the concept of a strategic triangle.¹⁵

In the 1990s the notion of a strategic triangle virtually vanished from Western discussions of current affairs. This can likewise be traced to at least four causes: awareness that power had become very unbalanced with no counterweight to the United States; the impression that Russia had started down the path to democracy and market reforms and would seek integration into the global community; the lack of strong ties between the Soviet Union and China in contrast to the expansion of NATO and U.S.-Japan security guidelines; and the popularity of new measures of comprehensive national power that emphasized economics, thereby boosting the EU and Japan while downgrading Russia and leaving China with little more than projections of how, if its economic growth continued for decades, it might become a counterweight to the United States.

Do the emerging conditions of the new decade suggest a shift back to a strategic triangle? Li Jingjie makes the case that strengthened Sino-Russian

¹⁵ Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and Its International Implications, 1945-1990* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992).

ties will go a long way toward making this a reality. If China's economy keeps growing at an impressive rate and Russia builds on the turnaround in economic growth of 1999 and on the political consensus that emerged in the first half of 2000, then each country will be taken more seriously in the United States. But these are not sufficient conditions for the emergence of a strategic triangle. Beijing and Moscow need leverage, and Washington must lose some of its global influence for that to happen.

One way for the United States to retain its overall influence is to exercise power in a restrained, predictable manner that disproves the charge of hegemonism and suggests that various powers, above all the EU and Japan, have significant influence in world affairs. Barring a rift between the United States and its developed allies, or at least widespread support from the other great powers, Beijing and Moscow would be hard pressed to justify the claim that they are corners in a strategic triangle. If, on the contrary, the United States approves NATO expansion inside the boundaries of the former Soviet Union, enacts the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, and pursues a missile defense program despite strong opposition from Moscow and Beijing, then it is quite possible that the two Eurasian powers will form a relationship verging on an alliance and behave in ways that make global security a primary issue again. Under these conditions, Washington's concerns might lead it to search for a weak link in Sino-Russian relations, reviving talk of a strategic triangle.

Another factor important to the evolution of a triangular framework is whether relations between Russia and China will assume more of the character of an alliance. Although the Chinese have been especially wary of using the term "alliance," it is actually Russians who shy away from the substance of a closer bond. If Moscow agreed to a substantially higher level of arms transfers and joint arms production, some of the old geostrategic vocabulary would likely reappear. If the Russian people accepted a much greater Chinese presence in their country, including a large inflow of migrant or contract labor, entrepreneurial activities, or joint industrial projects, prospects for economic integration would sharply increase. At present, it is easy to conclude that Russians, from the man on the street to regional political leaders to the Duma, are so fearful of becoming the *junior* partner of China that they really do not want these relations to advance appreciably. It might take a massive upsurge in anti-American nationalism to cause Russians to acquiesce in the face of growing Chinese power and allow alliance-type relations to emerge.

Given the above arguments, revival of the concept of the strategic triangle is a longshot. To be sure, American insensitivity, the impression that both Beijing and Moscow have confrontational relations with Washington, rising arms sales and economic ties that draw Beijing and Moscow closer, and preoccupation with strategic threats could set U.S. relations with the other two countries spiraling downward. But a much greater likelihood is that

Sino-Russian relations will remain too limited to justify use of the old Cold War label. Both countries will place too high a priority on economic growth to allow relations with the United States to slip badly. And even if Americans are tempted to bruise national sensitivities, Japan and the EU are likely to have moderating influences on the United States and on Chinese and Russian reactions. Although the world may stumble forward from one regional crisis to the next, including some close to the Chinese and Russian borders, all of the great powers will draw the line before their relations with each other suffer dramatically. While we will probably see the continuation of the troubles that have driven China and Russia together over the past eight years, stronger bilateral ties and continued tensions with the United States are also likely to fall well short of conditions needed for a strategic triangle.

Conclusion

There are at least four main arguments supporting the case that the Sino-Russian partnership will remain robust. First, a reassessment of the history of the past half-century of relations reveals their common regret at the enormous mutual harm done by their rift, as well as momentum that has been gathering strength for two decades to improve and expand their relationship. Secondly, the dynamics of great power relations have pushed these countries together in the 1990s and are likely to continue to do so. Thirdly, the many dimensions and uncertainties of globalization, while seeming to turn Chinese and Russians away from each other, also create undercurrents that will leave powerful forces in each country reliant on the other. Finally, national identities linked to great power objectives will keep drawing Beijing and Moscow to the idea of a strategic triangle. Along with the goal of multipolarity, China and Russia can be expected to embrace the theme of the strategic triangle in hopes of increasing their leverage vis-à-vis the United States.

The possibility of strategic quadrangles in Europe and the Asia-Pacific is also likely to be noted often in coming years. As long as the EU or at least some of its major states differ from the United States on security issues, Moscow will see advantage in attempting to add another power center to the mix. Admittedly, NATO's unified action in Yugoslavia and the EU's sharp criticisms of Russian conduct in Chechnya tended to quiet any talk of a quadrangle. But the quadrangle could again rise to the forefront as Putin cultivates special ties with British prime minister Tony Blair and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Jacques Chirac continues to champion multipolarity, and the United States is tempted to pursue missile defense policies not well supported in the EU. In the Asia-Pacific region, Japan assumes the role of the fourth power. In the last months of 1999 China appealed to Japan to improve relations. Over the past few years Beijing has been frustrated by the increasingly close ties between Japan and the United States, and contin-

ues to harbor the hope that conflicts of interest will give it room to maneuver. Yet, despite talk that Russia is an Asian power and that China is on its way to becoming the second superpower, neither country seriously considers the other to be part of a regional quadrangle. In Europe, Moscow focuses on a triangle without China, and Beijing only pays lip service to Russia's role in the Asia-Pacific region. By denying the other a full place in their respective regions of primary concern, Russia and China weaken their own claims of a global strategic triangle.

Close ties between China and Russia do not mean an alliance. For Russians, according to the logic of observers at home and abroad, economic security should take precedence, and the notion that geopolitical threats endanger the country lacks support.¹⁶ For China, difficulties of maintaining an economic growth rate of 7 to 8 percent and continuing the path of reform so vital to social stability should also keep economic security in the forefront of concerns. It would take serious diplomatic mishandling by the United States and alarmist provocations by China or Russia to lead to a Sino-Russian alliance. In the 1990s it was hard to imagine that such an outcome would occur. In the year 2000 the chances are still not very high, but the possibility deserves scrutiny. In the meantime, the debate about whether a strategic triangle is emerging will serve as a new focus of contention as great power relations continue to unfold.

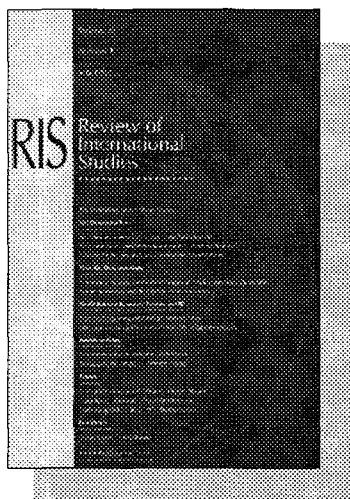


¹⁶ Gilbert Rozman, Mikhail G. Nosov, and Koji Watanabe, eds., *Russia and East Asia: The 21st Century Security Environment* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

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Partners in Discord Only

by Stephen Blank

Despite presidential transitions in Russia and the United States, the bilateral relationship is and will remain troubled. Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, the loud proclamation of a new “strategic partnership,” and assertions, at least by American officials, of a significant community of interests between Washington and Moscow, growing rifts in interests, policies, status, and perceptions are undermining relations beyond the point of mutual trust.¹ While this discord has not precluded bilateral cooperation, even limited partnerships will prove difficult and remain the exception, not the rule, for the foreseeable future.

This is so in part because U.S. and Russian policymakers show little comprehension of each other's interests or understanding of the major issues of contemporary European security.² Such incomprehension in turn reflects structural, ideological, and political factors in both governments that poison their bilateral relations. Each legislature views the other government with enormous suspicion and mistrust, and both governments lack the incentive or capability to initiate fundamental breakthroughs in their relationship, for instance, by reaching an agreement on development of missile defenses.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright professed an inability to understand why Russia rejects American arguments in favor of missile defense and intention to withdraw from the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty that limits such deployments.³ If Albright cannot grasp Moscow's reasoning here, nei-

¹ See “US Ambassador Views Russia Relations,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia (henceforth, FBIS-SOV), July 22, 1999, from *Argumenty i Fakty*, July 1, 1999; “Strobe Talbott on US-Russian Relations,” FBIS-SOV, July 17, 1999, from *Izvestiya*, July 16, 1999.

² “Still Most Awkward Partners,” *The Economist*, May 9, 1998, pp. 21–22; “Press Conference by President Clinton and President Obasanjo of Nigeria,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Oct. 28, 1999; Bob Herbert, “War Games,” *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1998.

³ Daniel Schorr, “The New Arms Race,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 29, 1999; Randall Miklesen, “Albright Slams Defense Warning,” *Washington Times*, Oct. 27, 1999.

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ther she nor other policymakers are hearing the symphony of protest on this issue emanating from Russia. Such deafness in turn helps to explain the growing perception among Russians that the United States is again their chief enemy.

Washington, as seen from Moscow, is mounting a coherent economic, political, and military campaign to marginalize Russia in Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the world. The American purpose is to relegate Russia to a long-term position as a quasi-colonial exporter of raw materials to the global economy, and ultimately to fragment Russia itself. This perception saturates Russia's media and politics, making the American obliviousness to it all the more inexplicable. One strategic theory increasingly aired is that Russia is the target of an ongoing U.S. information war to undermine the cognitive and moral basis of Russian society. This outlook connects notions of ideological and internal war to perceptions of America as an enemy.⁴

What is more, neither country possesses any serious political base in support of reconciliation, nor any recognition of shared vital interests save for the prevention of nuclear war. As one Russian report observed, the U.S.-Russian relationship is one of sovereign and vassal, not of equals.⁵ However, the most important structural factors in Russia relate to the manner in which its government has failed to organize its own national security policy.

Structure, Ideology, and Policy in Russia

As president, Boris Yeltsin tried to achieve little beyond perpetuating his own power. He tolerated corruption and imposed a quasi despotism on postcommunist Russia, and so far his heir has hinted at nothing new besides the recentralization of (unaccountable) power in Moscow. Indeed, rather than building democracy by repudiating Yeltsin's ruinous policies, Vladimir Putin has turned instead towards authoritarianism and domestic war. During the campaign leading up to his March 2000 election, he refused to engage his opponents or release his program for allegedly fundamental transformations in Russia's economy and government lest, he said, it be attacked. Once elected, he steadily undermined the devolution of power to the provinces, perhaps the most promising trend of democratization in Russia, unleashed police and military repression against the media, and decreed control over the Internet by the police. He has connived with the military to expand the war in Chechnya and reinstituted military training in the schools. He has also appointed many former KGB and FSB (domestic counterintelligence) officials to supervisory positions in the government, turned a blind eye toward

⁴ Stephen J. Blank, *Russia's Armed Forces on the Brink of Reform* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1998), pp. 34–37.

⁵ "Stepashin U.S. Trip Seen As 'PR Event,'" FBIS-SOV, July 30, 1999, from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 29, 1999.

corruption (aside from the arrest of a potentially troublesome media mogul), declared the defense industry to be the locomotive of economic recovery, threatened Georgia and Azerbaijan, reinstituted a policy criticizing neighboring states for policies towards their Russian minorities, and given the Justice Ministry unlimited powers to control political organizations and regional governments. Nonetheless, the Clinton administration clung forlornly to the hope that he will prove a reformer.⁶

Yeltsin's legacy also has profound implications for Russia's foreign relations. Though too weak domestically to cooperate internationally, and lacking the political consensus, material resources, and good ideas needed to make a positive contribution to world politics, Russia simply rejects the status quo. It cannot adequately define or fully implement its diplomatic agenda with the United States and other major players or face the emerging security agenda of failing states, pollution, transnational crime, drugs, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Nor, since Russia's foreign policies are often domestically driven (in which regard it is hardly unique), is there much incentive for Moscow to consider other powers' interests. The upshot of all this is that Russia is regressing to the status of a Third World, if not "failed," state, and foreigners have taken over many of the functions nominally belonging to Moscow.⁷ Virtually every analysis of Russian government begins with the inchoate quality of the Kremlin's policymaking and the "privatization" of the state, a concept that the State Department regards as heresy.⁸ Since Russian elites cannot look beyond their private, sectoral, or factional interests, they cannot even define, let alone pursue, Russia's national interests. In 1992–93 Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev even asked Richard Nixon to define Russia's interests for him.⁹

In retrospect, the much-touted U.S.-Russian strategic partnership was unrealistic if only because the two sides' definitions of partnership were

⁶ See Ariel Cohen, "The Rise of Putin: What it Means for the Future of Russia," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, no. 1353, Mar. 28, 2000; Michael Gordon, "Washington Bites Its Nails as Russian Votes Are Tallied," *New York Times*, Mar. 27, 2000; and Sharon La Franiere and Steven Mufson, "Putin's Victory Could Bring Thaw in U.S.-Russian Ties," *Washington Post*, Mar. 28, 2000.

⁷ Sergei Medvedev, "Former Soviet Union," in *The New Security Agenda: A Global Survey*, ed. Paul B. Stares (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998), pp. 75–116; Stephen Blank, "Russian Democracy: From the Future to the Past," *Demokratizatsiia*, Summer 1998, pp. 550–77; "Western Man's Burden," *The Economist*, Dec. 12, 1998, pp. 49–50.

⁸ Stephen Blank, "Who's Minding the State? The Failure of Russian Security Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Mar.–Apr. 1998, pp. 3–11; Michael McFaul, "Russia's 'Privatized' State as an Impediment to Democratic Consolidation, Part I," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1998), pp. 191–99; Yegor Gaidar, "How Nomenklatura Privatized Its Power," *Russian Politics and Law*, Jan.–Feb. 1996, p. 35; Vladimir Brovkin, "Fragmentation of Authority and Privatization of the State From Gorbachev to Yeltsin," *Demokratizatsiia*, Summer 1998, pp. 504–17; Celestine Bohlen, "A Plea to Yeltsin: Free Russia From 'Puppet Masters,'" *New York Times*, May 30, 1999. As for the State Department's attitude, a 1996 anecdote expresses this concisely. At a conference in November 1996 on Russia's political future, when four panelists excoriated the corruption and bankruptcy of the Yeltsin regime, a former member of the embassy in Moscow plaintively replied, "But they had free elections."

⁹ Dimitri K. Simes, *After the Collapse: Russia Seeks Its Place as a Great Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), pp. 18–20; Medvedev, "Former Soviet Union," pp. 78–81.

incompatible and many Russian leaders still expect changes in the status quo that will benefit Russia.¹⁰ Moscow understood strategic partnership as cooperation with Washington in order to uphold the European status quo, retain an exclusive sphere of influence in the CIS, and obtain Western help for development. Washington assumed that partnership implied Moscow's assent to American projects aimed at remodeling Russia in America's image. As Thomas Friedman wrote:

Personally, I thought we fought the cold war not to contain Russia but to change Russia—so Moscow could really work with the U.S. in reducing both countries' nuclear arsenals, stemming weapons proliferation and confronting rogue states. I thought the real fruit of the cold war would be to have a Russia that cooperates with us on our post-cold-war agenda.¹¹

Moscow also had to swallow American insults in the interest of its integration with the West, in the same manner that Ambassador Jonathan Dean wrote about China:

The projected relationship also requires from the junior partner very clear understanding of the objectives of the relationship, enormous self-discipline and self-restraint, and the capacity to digest repeated humiliations without choking on them or permitting domestic political forces to react violently. Germany and Japan have been able to do this, each in their own way. It is hard to visualize modern China in this role.¹²

Yet the administration apparently still believes that it knows Russia's needs better than Moscow does, even though American policy toward postcommunist Russia has amounted to little more than the embrace of "reformers" who have ignored, if not shared in, the systematic looting of its economy. Washington has yet to acknowledge its error in tying its interests to Russian personalities, and persists in throwing good money after bad. Consequently, the United States has had little leverage there, hardly a sign of successful policy.¹³

¹⁰ Andrei Kokoshin, *Reflections on Russia's Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1998), p. 31; Address by Y. M. Primakov to the OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, Sept. 20, 1996, p. 2 (transcript made available by the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United States).

¹¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Gulf of Tonkin II," *New York Times*, Mar. 31, 1998. See also Mark R. Sanderson, "NATO, the United States, and Russia: Flexible Security After the Cold War," *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Essay Competition, Essays, 1999* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1999), pp. 33–44.

¹² Jonathan Dean, "The US in East Asia," *Security, Arms Control and Defence Restructuring in East Asia*, ed. Bjorn Moeller (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 1998), p. 266.

¹³ "You Have to Play by the Rules" (excerpts from President Clinton's remarks), *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1998; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, "U.S. Strategy for Responding to Russia's Transformation," address to the U.S.-Russian Business Council, Chicago, Oct. 2, 1998, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Oct. 1998, pp. 1–5; U.S. Department of State, "Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace," Johnson's Russia List, no. 2381, Sept. 18, 1998 (davidjohnson@erols.com); James Brown, "US Toughens Chechnya Talk But Has Little Leverage," *Christian Science Monitor*, Oct. 28, 1999.

Since mid-1998 Russia has stonewalled the international community on its debts and sought more International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailouts that only worsen its long-term situation and can never be repaid. Once the loans are awarded, Russia immediately begins renegeing on its commitments. As Russian bond analyst Parvoleta Sherteva told *The Economist*, "The Russian government and corporate borrowers view debt not as a promise to pay at a future date, but as an option on a future roll-over."¹⁴ Since IMF transfers essentially compensate for Russian tax defaults, U.S. consumers are subsidizing Russia's deficit and corruption.¹⁵ Little hope exists for expanded foreign investment, while the Chechen war and higher military spending inhibit badly needed economic and military reforms.

The notion of strategic partnership also clashed with reality because Russia has not stopped trying to reunite the CIS, while Washington cannot countenance its threats to the status quo. Beginning in 1994 the United States recognized the danger Moscow's ambitions posed to energy resources and security and initiated a coordinated military, political, and economic program to tie the former Soviet republics firmly to the West.¹⁶ Finally, the idea of a Russo-American global partnership amounts to a benign version of Cold War bipolarity, which is sharply at odds with the multipolar world that Russia now desires and claims already exists. What Russia really wants is a new bipolarity based on equality with America, a chimera that exposes the falsity of its multipolarity doctrine.

Bilateral discord also owes a good deal to the Great Power (*Derzhavnost'*) mystique so prevalent in Russian thought. Few Russian elites accept their neighbors as real and equal states. While Russia opposes NATO and insists upon a Eurasian collective-security system wherein the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) restrains everyone *else*, it wants this same system to grant Russia an exclusive sphere of influence within the CIS, superpower status equal to that of Washington, and freedom from interference in internal Russian affairs (read: Chechnya). This "Great Power" ambition is unsustainable, anachronistic, and unacceptable to neighboring states for the reason that "Russia's 'near abroad' is, in many cases, also democratic Europe's near

**Russia really
wants a new
bipolarity based
on equality
with America.**

¹⁴ "Russia and America Try to Make Up," *The Economist*, July 31, 1999, pp. 39–40; "Russian Debt: The Waiting Game," *The Economist*, Aug. 7, 1999, p. 64.

¹⁵ "8 Days On, IMF Deal a Shambles," *Moscow Times*, Aug. 7, 1999; Mark Kramer, "The Changing Economic Complexion of Eastern Europe and Russia: Results and Lessons From the 1990s," *SAIS Review*, Summer–Fall 1999, pp. 37–39; Michael McFaul, *American Policy Towards Russia: Framework for Analysis and Guide to Action* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1997), p. 60.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "US Policy and the Caucasus," *Contemporary Caucasus Newsletter*, Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Spring 1998, pp. 3–4.

abroad.”¹⁷ Thus, Russia’s consistent avoidance of a dialogue with Poland has only reinforced Warsaw’s pro-Western policy. In 1998 high-ranking Polish officials explained their diplomacy as being all about the “U.S. presence in Polish policy toward the Baltic states and Ukraine, common actions regarding Belarus, mutual consultations on policy toward Russia and so on.” Poland expected Washington to defend its interests in the second round of the Conventional Forces in Europe talks, and Washington expects Poland to be a leader in Central and Eastern Europe. Normally, Russia would strongly resist that policy, but no coherent Russian policy towards Poland and Central Europe is discernible.¹⁸ Thus, Russia has steadily lost ground in Europe and the CIS alike and is in military and economic retreat. Washington, aiming to enlarge the new democratic community, is only too ready to fill the vacuum, expand its commitments, encroach on Russia’s self-defined sphere of interests, and thus provoke Russian apprehension and enmity.

Although Russia faces real threats of disintegration, consignment to a quasi-colonial status, marginalization in Eurasia, and military inferiority vis-à-vis its main or future rivals for years to come, its elites persist in pressing for military rivalry with Washington. Russian fears of U.S. superiority in the new technologies of conventional and information warfare so influence its new military doctrine and strategy that Moscow has asked the United Nations to ban “smart” weapons and explicitly invokes the threat of preemptive or first-strike nuclear use against conventional threats.¹⁹

As a consequence, Russian military thought is heading in exactly the opposite direction from that of American policy. To defend against the ubiquitous threats it perceives, Russia relies almost exclusively on nuclear weapons, while the United States is rapidly moving away from them. And since those weapons are of little relevance to today’s political-economic agenda, Russia’s assets are maladapted to its needs. This asymmetric defense and security posture impedes arms control and regional security agreements and helps to explain the stalemate over START II and national missile defense.

Yeltsin clearly preferred a system with no coherent national security policy or institution capable of making one. Putin has yet to change that, perhaps because the current situation precludes any institutional account-

¹⁷ John Roper and Peter Van Ham, “Redefining Russia’s Role in Europe,” in *Russia and Europe: The Emerging Security Agenda*, ed. Vladimir Baranovsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 517. See also “Ivanov Views Russia’s World Role,” FBIS-SOV, June 25, 1999, from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 25, 1999.

¹⁸ Wojtek Lamentowicz, “Russia and East-Central Europe: Strategic Options,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Eastern Europe, (henceforth, FBIS-EEU) 98-188, July 8, 1998, from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 7, 1998; Yuri Davydov, “Russian Security and East-Central Europe,” in *Russia and Europe*, pp. 355–385; “Need to Spur Polish-Russian Relations,” FBIS-EEU, July 20, 1999, from *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, July 7, 1999; “Why Poles Fear Russia’s New President,” *The Economist*, Apr. 1, 2000, pp. 48–49.

¹⁹ “Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii” (Draft military doctrine of the Russian Federation), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Oct. 9, 1999, pp. 3–4; Matthew Campbell, “Logic Bomb’ Arms Race Panics Russia,” *Sunday Times* (London), Nov. 29, 1998.

ability and magnifies presidential power. But such “deinstitutionalization” threatens both Russia’s integrity and economic progress because a functioning state is essential to a viable economy, not to mention democratization and a stable pattern of foreign and defense policies that could revive Russia’s international capabilities.²⁰

For too long Washington ignored the truth about Yeltsin and his closest advisers, and the State Department even censored embassy and outside analyses that reported these trends. Nothing could be allowed to disturb the myth of strategic partnership. Hence, the United States supported a person and a clique and called that approach a policy, even as it now rushes to work with Putin and celebrates “reformers” distinguished mainly by their cupidity and/or political ineffectiveness.²¹

Tsarism Redivivus

In many respects the structure of contemporary Russian governance recalls that forged by the tsars. The armed forces remain a “kingdom of darkness” in which brutality, corruption, and arbitrariness prevail precisely because no legal accountability exists.²² Similarly, as under tsars and Soviets, the autocracies of central, provincial, and regional governments are mutually reinforcing, with the result that Russia today remains *undergoverned*. Thus, “the invasive state is marked, paradoxically, by the extraordinary underdevelopment of modern forms of institutionalization of state power,” and Russian elites from Putin on down maintain that their country faces real threats of disintegration.²³ Finally, no more succinct description of Russian foreign policymaking exists than this recent assessment of tsarist foreign policy:

The autocrat was the linchpin of the system, the only coordinating instance which could integrate and give direction to the policy of various institutions, all of which

²⁰ Pavel Kandel, “The Impact of the Crisis on Russian Politics,” *East European Constitutional Review*, Summer 1999, pp. 51–55.

²¹ Janine R. Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe 1989–1998* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); Fritz Ermarth, “Seeing Russia Plain: Russian Crime and American Intelligence,” *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, pp. 5–14.

²² Stephen J. Blank, “Valuing the Human Factor: The Reform of Russian Military Manpower,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Mar. 1999, pp. 82–87.

²³ Richard Sakwa, “Russia, Communism, Democracy,” in *Developments in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics*, ed. Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman, 3rd ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 291; S. Frederick Starr, “The Paradox of Yeltsin’s Russia,” *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 99, no. 3 (1995), pp. 66–73; Alexander Kennaway, *Continuity and Conflict in Russian Government* (Sandhurst, U.K.: Conflict Studies Centre, Royal Military Academy, 1999); “Yeltsin Address to Diplomats,” *The Russian Weekly*, July 24, 1998, from Johnson’s Russia List; “Rybkin: Russia’s National Security Concept,” FBIS-SOV, Aug. 23, 1998, from *Vooruzheniye, Politika, Konversiya*, Feb. 1, 1997; “Russia’s National Interests,” Johnson’s Russia List, Aug. 15, 1997; Paul Goble, “Can Russian Diplomacy Hold Russia Together,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newslines* (henceforth, *RFE/RL Newslines*), Sept. 23, 1998; *The Monitor*, Mar. 19 and Sept. 23, 1998; Yevgeny Primakov, “Russia: Reforms and Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs* (Moscow), no. 4 (1998), pp. 3–6.

depended upon the Emperor for the power and influence that they wielded. . . . The coordinating role of the Emperor was central because the system of imperial government, especially at the center in St. Petersburg, was disorganized and disunited, and deliberately kept so by the autocrat. . . . Institutional autonomy (*Vedomstvennost'*) was jealously guarded by officialdom, and it invariably produced different bureaucratic and policy profiles for different institutions. These were reflected in particular "institutional points of view" (*Vedomestvennyi Tochki Zreniia*), whose existence was tolerated by the Tsar and formally acknowledged by the political culture of the bureaucracy. This institutional autonomy may have represented a bureaucratic dysfunction within Tsarist government, but it was also a systemic characteristic of the autocracy, necessary for its perpetuation.²⁴

Indeed, Yeltsin enjoyed being called a tsar, and the executive structure he introduced resembles late tsarist models. In 1908 Foreign Minister A. P. Izvol'skii remarked that "despotism" always bore the same fruits: "incoherence if not contradiction in the conduct of affairs which are treated simultaneously by various departments which ignore each other . . . and which obtain from the supreme leader detailed decisions which are irreconcilable in fact: the Russo-Japanese war came from this." His words are equally apt today, even as Russia's lust for a neoimperial policy and invocations of *Derzhavnost'* evoke tsarist equations of autocracy and empire. In sum, Russia has so far failed to find a new conceptual and political basis for statehood, leaving it open to governments tending toward empire or ruin.²⁵

These trends belie the fond hope that Russia is, or soon will become, a Western-style democracy, and suggest instead the danger that Russia will succumb to excessive risk-taking that could result in war, revolution, or both—as in 1904–5 and 1914–17.

The Bilateral Ideological Contest

Ideologically, the contest between the would-be strategic partners pits the conception of Russia as a Eurasian great power with an exclusive sphere of influence encompassing the CIS against the Clinton administration's perception of the United States as the "indispensable nation" that champions universal values and enjoys an ever-enlarging sphere of influence. As Adam Garfinkle put it, "Like partisans of U.S. benign hegemony, the president and his main aides see the United States, not as a key pillar in an evolving post Cold-War multipolar balance, but as a unitary power so strong and so benign

²⁴ Theodore Taranovski, "Institutions, Political Culture and Foreign Policy in Late Imperial Russia," *Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: Multiple Faces of the Russian Empire*, ed. Catherine Evtuhov et al. (Moscow: O.G.I., 1997), p. 59.

²⁵ Richard Wortman, "Ceremony and Empire in the Evolution of the Russian Monarchy," in *Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg*, pp. 32–37. See also Kennaway, *Continuity and Conflict*; Blank, "Russian Democracy," pp. 557–58, 567–73.

as to transcend any such balance altogether.”²⁶ President Clinton himself has confirmed this view, stating that his strategy of enlarging the democratic community throughout the former Soviet bloc “is a fundamental departure from the way geopolitics have been practiced by nation states. We are trying to write a future for Europe that will be different from its past. What we have done is to create a balance of power that restrains and empowers all those who come within the framework of the agreement.” Some U.S. officials went so far as to claim that enlarging NATO would essentially transcend the entire history of European international relations.²⁷

From Moscow’s enduring “realist” perspective, however, Washington’s benign human rights rhetoric cloaks a drive for hegemony:

The United States has imposed one-sided arms control agreements on the Russians, pressured the post-Soviet republics to give up their own nuclear arsenals, fought a war in the Persian Gulf in order to disarm Iraq, sent troops to Haiti to impose a democratic system, bombed the Bosnian Serbs to the bargaining table, and proceeded with plans to expand NATO into Russia’s backyard, generating a predictably negative response from Moscow.²⁸

Essentially, Washington denies that power still plays a key role in world politics, even as it defends vital American interests by nakedly wielding its power, refusing to credit Russian interests and sensibilities, and encouraging Europe to regard the Caucasus and Transcaspian as its own “near abroad.” These new states have joined the Partnership for Peace and participate in exercises under its auspices. Administration officials regularly profess to seek a “win-win solution” in a region where enormous energy resources of great geopolitical significance are concentrated. These states are allegedly not zones of bilateral contention with Russia, but rather areas where, if Moscow only appreciated U.S. benevolence, profitable cooperation could ensue. NATO and U.S. officials regularly deny that their military exercises have any sinister intent, even though Russian officials habitually (and rightly) attack them as evidence that NATO intends to integrate the whole CIS into its zone of control.²⁹

²⁶ Adam Garfinkle, “NSC-68 Redux?” *SAIS Review*, Winter–Spring 1999, p. 146.

²⁷ Martin Walker, “Why Russia Needs NATO,” *Demokratizatsiia*, Fall 1997, pp. 536–42, 549; Robert E. Hunter, “NATO in the 21st Century: A Strategic Vision,” *Parameters*, Summer 1998, pp. 17–18.

²⁸ Stephen M. Walt, “The Gorbachev Interlude and International Relations Theory,” *Diplomatic History*, Summer 1997, p. 478. Whether or not the United States has in fact imposed agreements on Russia, certainly many Russians believe this to be the case.

²⁹ Anatol Lieven, “Ham-Fisted Hegemon: The Clinton Administration and Russia,” *Current History*, Oct. 1999, pp. 307–15; U.S. National Security Council, *Caspian Region Energy Development Report* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Council, 1997); Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, “A Farewell to Flashman: American Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia,” address at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (Washington, D.C.: July 21, 1997); U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman, “Remarks by Secretary Madeleine K. Albright to Students at Vilnius University and Question and Answer Session,” July 13, 1997; “The End of the Beginning: The Emergence of a new Russia,” address by Strobe Talbott, Sept. 19, 1997, from Johnson’s Russia List, no. 1220, Sept. 23, 1997; Floriana Fossato, “Russia: The Amount of Change Has been Extraordinary,”

Not surprisingly, only *Derzhavnost'* unites Russia's military and foreign policy elites, who openly assert, in Gaullist fashion, that a Russia without grandeur and global power is not Russia at all. Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov simply assumes that Russia is a global great power, even as it subsists on IMF handouts and as foreign governments and nongovernmental organizations assume functions inside Russia that the Kremlin will not or cannot fulfill. As for the official policy to reintegrate the CIS and suppress separatist trends within Russia, the elites mean to overcome or compensate for internal dissension through foreign expansion, in much the same manner as the last tsars.³⁰ Bewitched by *Derzhavnost'*, haunted by the past, and vexed by the unacceptable present, Russian elites can only lie brazenly to themselves and others about their conditions and the responsibility for it, habitually and falsely blaming Western stinginess while downplaying the impact of their own cupidity and governmental sloth.³¹ *Derzhavnost'* thus induces a kind of false consciousness and habitual mendacity that undermine Russia's foreign relations by inviting mistrust of its words and deeds.

American Structural Impediments

Some uniquely American structural shortcomings also feed the growing discord with Russia. Even as the Clinton administration proclaims the enlargement of the liberal democratic community, it is unable and unwilling to sustain the rapidly multiplying U.S. commitments.³² Washington has fallen into the dangerous trap of making foreign commitments for domestic reasons or in response to media pressure and allowing crises to spin out of control, responding only after no effective response is possible. As Italian scholar Mario Zucconi wrote before NATO's 1999 Kosovo campaign:

In fact, there is much improvisation and, in large measure, inability to come into the crisis before the issue becomes an intractable one. In interviews with this author in Brussels in June, 1998, about what to do and when to act in regard to Kosovo, several

from Johnson's Russia List, no. 1428, Dec. 12, 1997; "Interview with Bill Clinton, President of the United States," *International Affairs* (Moscow), no. 2 (1997), p. 5.

³⁰ Mikhail Tsypkin, "Military Power in Russian National Security Policy," in *The Soviet Empire Reconsidered: Essays in Honor of Adam B. Ulam*, ed. Sanford R. Lieberman et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), p. 204; Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, CSIA Studies in International Security, 1998), p. 195; "Foreign Minister Ivanov on Kosovo Results," FBIS-SOV, July 21, 1999, from *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, July 20, 1999; Edward Ozhiganov, "The Republic of Moldova: Transdnister and the 14th Army," in *Managing Conflict in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Alexei Arbatov et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 206-7; Vasily Krivokhiza, *Russia's National Security Policy: Conceptions and Realities*, trans. Richard Weitz (Cambridge, Mass.: Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1998), p. 32; "Strategic Policy Toward CIS Published," FBIS-SOV-95-188, Sept. 28, 1995, from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Sept. 23, 1995.

³¹ Jacob Heilbrunn, "Just Say Nyet," *The New Republic*, Mar. 22, 1999, pp. 18-22.

³² Sherie R. Schwenninger, "World Order Lost: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World," *World Policy Journal*, Summer 1999, pp. 42-71.

senior officials and military officers started by warning that the arrival of Christiane Amanpour, the CNN reporter, in Pristina, meant that NATO “had to do something”—needless to say, an indication of [the] lack of overall policies, of strategic planning, and even of well-defined mandates.³³

American observers confess these deficiencies, as a recent article on Bosnia concluded:

Today, national security commitments are not made pursuant to widely shared policy objectives. Indeed—our nation’s commitments of military forces are often not even made following policies clearly articulated by the president, much less those favored by the Congress. Instead, deployments are made, no-fly zones are enforced, bombing raids are executed, peace is enforced—all generally following a pattern of vague, shifting, and imprecise policies, shaped to avoid alienating any important domestic or foreign constituency.³⁴

Meanwhile, Washington’s increased obligations vis-à-vis the CIS states in the name of poorly defined and probably untenable interests or values cannot help but alarm the Russians. And yet the U.S. administration and Congress evidently see no reason to accommodate Russia anywhere.

The predominance of short-term political calculations and the absence of a post-Cold War consensus on American national interests and strategy compel the president to pursue ad hoc foreign policies and forge periodic understandings with congressional coalitions on each issue that arises. This process inherently diminishes presidential authority, precludes consistency of policy, damages the credibility of U.S. commitments, and renders any long-ripening strategy impossible.

Thus, with regard to the former Soviet bloc, the American economic contribution has been denounced as small, laggard, and divorced from political reforms, whereas in fact the transfers from the West to Russia have been immense and largely stolen or wasted. Nor is Congress the sole culprit. Bush administration officials admitted in 1991–92 that they were singularly devoid of fresh thinking about what to do about Russia.³⁵ Clinton’s policies, in turn, only encouraged Yeltsin to fight his opponents rather than stabilize Russia, and supported every wrong turn in reform and democratization, even as critics within the administration who accurately gauged Russian trends were ruthlessly silenced. In truth, Washington’s sole strategy has been to give Yeltsin symbolic recognition and enough money to keep going while the United States pocketed the major material gains from its “partnership” with an

³³ Mario Zucconi, “NATO in the Mediterranean,” in *Mediterranean Security into the Coming Millennium*, ed. Stephen J. Blank (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1999), pp. 119–120.

³⁴ William C. Banks and Jeffrey D. Straussman, “A New Imperial Presidency? Insights from U.S. Involvement in Bosnia,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 114, no. 2 (1999), p. 199.

³⁵ Indeed, George Bush and Brent Scowcroft’s memoir of their policies between 1989 and 1993 has not a word to say about what happened after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

impotent Russia. But insofar as the U.S.-Russian relationship remains essentially a personalized one with little social or geopolitical grounding, it is built on sand.³⁶ No one in Russia today stands to gain from being pro-American. Meanwhile both Russia and the United States are courting supporters, if not allies, in Europe, the CIS, China, and the Middle East—that is, the traditional battlegrounds of international politics. And where the issues between the two states interact with these structural considerations, a clash is inevitable.

Fallout from Kosovo

Kosovo exemplified the widening bilateral gap. Washington proved that it cannot yet discern any horizon to its enlarging empire, distinguish its economic, political, and security interests from lofty rhetoric, or match its military resources to its growing commitments. But from the Russian perspective, NATO enlargement is clearly a plot to oust Russia from its traditional spheres of influence and keep it under severe economic and military pressure. Since Russian elites still view NATO exclusively as a military-political bloc by which Washington sustains its European hegemony, paranoia inevitably informs Russian policies.³⁷

That NATO's enlargement and strategic concept really aim to pressure, threaten, marginalize, and perhaps even dismember Russia has become the official threat assessment in the Russian civilian and military establishments, and nothing seemed to prove its veracity so much as did Kosovo. NATO's war there belied the claims made by the West concerning NATO's peaceful and benevolent effects upon European security agendas and seemed to suggest that the alliance would weigh in on the side of secessionists, whether in Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, or Russia itself. Moscow also protested NATO's bypassing of the United Nations and OSCE, where Russia's voice would be heard, and accordingly denounced the bombing of Serbia as a war of aggression. Russia's government and military, for their part, embraced doctrines and strategies of confrontation that threaten to renuclearize the Eurasian military theater.³⁸

Kosovo also showed that a fundamental flaw in the Russo-American

³⁶ Robert L. Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider's Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989–1992* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997), p. 351; Heilbrunn, "Just Say Nyet," pp. 18–22; Robert G. Kaiser, "Have We Put Too Much Stock in Yeltsin?" *Washington Post Weekly*, August 23, 1999, pp. 21–22; Simes, *After the Collapse*, pp. 102–17; Gordon, "Washington Bites Its Nails"; La Franiere and Mufson, "Putin's Victory Could Bring Thaw."

³⁷ Sanderson, "NATO, the United States, and Russia," pp. 38–44; "Kosovo Shows Crisis in Russia-West Relations," FBIS-SOV, June 27, 1999, from *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, June 18–24, 1999.

³⁸ Based on author's conversations with high-ranking military officers and analysts, Moscow, June 1999. See also "Ivanov Views Russia's World Role," FBIS-SOV, June 25, 1999, from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 25, 1999; "Konceptsiya Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossii" (The concept of Russia's national security), *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, Jan. 14, 2000.

relationship is that neither power has an adequate concept of what an overall Eurasian peace really means. In this respect they resemble Britain and France during the French revolutionary wars, as Paul Schroeder has written:

Both powers entered the war without a concept of peace. Both proposed to use Europe for their individual ends; neither gave serious consideration to what kind of Europe it wanted, or what kind would work, or what kind of settlement other European states, including its rival, could be brought to accept and live with. Thus they fought over Europe and, to a considerable extent, at the expense of Europe, without really thinking about Europe.³⁹

Henry Kissinger argued that Kosovo revealed that the United States and Europe are diverging and cannot harmonize their interests or visions of Europe in terms acceptable to each other, let alone Russia.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Russia's terms for Europe are plainly unacceptable to every other country with the possible exception of Belarus.

Moscow is much to blame for rejecting reality, but U.S. policy is equally, if not more, at fault. Americans continue to speak and act as if they have no definable interests other than the worldwide triumph of morality, and the United States relentlessly expands its sphere of influence with little sense of the implied commitments and responsibilities it is acquiring. Its present Balkan engagements command little enthusiasm at home, but are now vital to NATO's success and the credibility of American leadership. Already, America's "victory" in Kosovo is under threat, and Bosnia remains a corrupted ward of the international system. Can Russians take solace in the fact that Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, a man with demonstrable sympathy for Russia, states that U.S. policy expresses universal values?

**Americans act
as if their only
interest is the
worldwide
triumph of
morality.**

Washington cannot admit that others might suspect that its self-professed virtue is a figleaf for more malevolent goals. Certainly Russia contests Washington's vision of Europe, and it is possible that the European allies in NATO do, too, in light of their efforts to develop a European Union foreign and defense identity.⁴¹ But even if the Clinton administration's motives were as pure as professed, motives may ultimately not matter, as Schroeder again explains: "Means make more difference than ends in international politics; the total results of a war usually depend less on its so-called defensive or aggressive character, or even on the goals one is fighting for, than on the means used to win it, the amount and nature of the force employed."⁴²

³⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 117.

⁴⁰ Henry Kissinger, "The End of NATO As We Know It," *Washington Post*, Aug. 15, 1999.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, p. 244.

The Troubling Conclusion

Washington and Moscow already clash over security in the Balkans, the Baltic, the Middle East, East Asia, the CIS, Transcaspian energy routes, START II and III, the ABM Treaty, WMD proliferation, and Russian economic reform. In all these cases American policymakers assume—and have publicly stated—that Russia must and will follow Washington's lead, or even that Russia has no legitimate interests in these areas. In the Persian Gulf, the United States has tried to exclude Russia, but has been unable to make its sanctions stick in Iraq or forestall continued Russian contacts with Iran.⁴³

Finally, Washington's policies on Europe and arms control are sowing dragon's teeth. Russia's new military doctrine explicitly ties European and Eurasian contingencies to nuclear use, undoing one of the greatest shared triumphs in the Cold War. The United States does not have or acknowledge an agenda for the most urgent threats to northern Europe: the breakdown of the ecological or social order due to a nuclear accident or collapse of the Russian economy.⁴⁴ Nor is there any urgency about Ukraine's hovering on the edge of collapse. Instead, the effect of American insouciance has been only to drive Russia and China into hitherto unthinkable military collaboration at a moment when U.S. relations with China are at their worst since the time of Mao Zedong.

The troubling conclusion, therefore, is that Russians remain willfully blinded by their history as a great power, while Washington wants to believe that history is meaningless and that its self-evident benevolence will end great power politics forever. Unless and until they both shed their myths and seek, in hard-headed fashion, a common vision of peace, reality will continue to make a mockery of their claims to "strategic partnership."



⁴³ Vladimir I. Ivanov, "Russia on the Pacific: Beyond Communism and Confrontation," in *Future of the Pacific Rim: Scenarios for Regional Cooperation*, ed. Barbara K. Bundy, Stephen D. Burns, and Kimberley V. Weichel (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1994), pp. 189–90. See also Jonathan Pollack, "The Evolving Security Environment in Asia: Its Impact on Russia," in *Russia in Asia* (Stockholm: SIPRI, forthcoming); Michael Evans, "Russia Uses Caspian for Missile Run," *Times* (London), Oct. 25, 1999.

⁴⁴ A recent Council on Foreign Relations report focuses almost exclusively on Baltic membership in NATO and the EU, ignoring the potential collapse of a Russian nuclear power plant or another similar massive ecological disaster. *U.S. Policy Toward Northeastern Europe*, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Project Director (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999).

No Transatlantic Divorce in the Offing

by Robert J. Lieber

A decade after the end of the Cold War, the U.S.-European alliance has become the object of intense scrutiny. The disappearance of the Soviet threat appears to have diminished the need for security cooperation. Economic and trade frictions as well as European resentment of American domination seem increasingly evident, and calls for European autonomy and American disengagement can be heard on both sides of the Atlantic. Moreover, expansion and deepening of the European Union, together with recent initiatives to create a real EU military capability, suggest that Europe may at last be acquiring the means to forge a more independent and even competitive relationship with the United States.

Contrary to these appearances, however, good reasons exist for believing that the Euro-American partnership still rests on a solid foundation and that the prospects for sustaining it are stronger than they may seem. To understand why, it is useful to recall the past tensions and periodic crises that marked the alliance during the Cold War, consider the new stresses that have arisen since then, and identify the underlying realities of power and politics that sustain the relationship. While future cooperation should not be taken for granted, Europe's need for a hedge against emerging security risks, America's continuing primacy, the EU's underwhelming achievements in foreign and defense policy, and shared interests in international economic stability all continue to bind Europe to the United States.

The Troubled Partnership Then and Now

Tensions between Europe and America are nothing new. Virtually from the time of its inception in 1949, the Atlantic alliance has weathered a

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wide range of internal disputes not only over strategy, but economics and politics as well. Early crises included a fight over German rearmament and the 1954 rejection of a proposed European Defense Community by the French National Assembly. The controversy was serious enough for Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to threaten an “agonizing reappraisal” of America’s relationship with Europe. Two years later, the Eisenhower administration found itself at loggerheads with both France and Britain when it joined with Moscow to condemn the Anglo-French expedition to retake the Suez Canal from Egypt. A more subtle but far-reaching problem arose after the October 1957 Soviet launch of *Sputnik*, the world’s first orbiting space satellite. With the American homeland potentially vulnerable to Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), how could an American president credibly sustain the commitment to Europe if defending Paris or West Berlin meant exposing Chicago to nuclear attack? Intra-alliance conflicts continued with the French withdrawal from NATO’s integrated military command structure in 1966–67. Symptomatic of disputes at the time was the title of Henry Kissinger’s book *The Troubled Partnership*.¹

The end of the Cold War seemed to presage the unraveling of the alliance.

Out-of-area disagreements also developed over France’s desperate and ultimately futile efforts to keep control in Indochina (1946–54) and Algeria (1954–62), and subsequently over U.S. intervention in Vietnam. A severe crisis erupted after the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, with the accompanying Arab oil embargo against the United States and the Netherlands, and the French-led tilt toward the oil-producing countries in contrast to American support for Israel. Oil and energy-related issues continued to reverberate in policies toward Iran after its 1979 revolution and in European-American disputes over the construction of a pipeline to carry natural gas from Russia to the West. Finally, great controversy erupted over the U.S. and NATO decision to deploy intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe in the early 1980s in order to counter Soviet SS-20 missiles.

Multiple examples could be added to the list: trade frictions, economic competition, agricultural issues, cultural conflicts, and disagreements about policy toward Cuba, China, and alliance coordination, among others. These Cold War–era disputes often stemmed from deep-seated differences, but the level of disagreement never proved sufficient to rupture the alliance. A fundamental reason was the threat posed by the Soviet Union. While other sources of cooperation played a part, the underlying mutual security imperative caused Western Europe to remain closely allied with the United States in order to preserve an unambiguous American guarantee.

¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership: A Re-Appraisal of the Atlantic Alliance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).

The end of the Cold War seemed to presage a new era and the unraveling of an alliance that had been created in response to a Soviet threat that now no longer existed. The European states, relieved of this threat, might well cease their Cold War bandwagoning behavior and instead begin to balance against one another or even against American power.² Moreover, this distancing could occur not only in security policy, but across a range of economic issues, since the end of the Cold War seemed to remove the imperative to contain international commercial or financial conflicts for the sake of preserving the anticommunist alliance.³

Without the Cold War concerns that held it within the Atlantic orbit, France has become the most strident critic of American power and the most avid in seeking ways to increase its own autonomy and to steer the European Union toward a more independent course. Near the end of his life, President François Mitterrand gave vent to a deep antagonism, declaring, "France does not know it, but we are at war with America. Yes, a permanent war, a vital war, an economic war, a war without death. Yes, they are very hard, the Americans, they are voracious, they want undivided power over the world."⁴ More recently, French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine proclaimed that, "We cannot accept . . . the unilateralism of a single hyperpower," and President Jacques Chirac has called for a "more balanced . . . distribution of power in the world."⁵

While most EU governments have been measured in their views, the desire for a more independent European course is evident throughout much of the continent, and especially among segments of the political Left and nationalist Right.

The Kosovo crisis during the first half of 1999 stimulated European demands for a more effective and autonomous European defense capability. The brutal ethnic cleansing carried out by the Milosevic regime against Kosovo's Albanian population left the Europeans feeling impotent insofar as they could not act without the leadership of the United States. EU member states simply lacked the power-projection and common decision-making capabilities that could have enabled them to intervene. Even under the aegis

² On the return to great power balancing after the Cold War, see, e.g., John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Summer 1990, pp. 5–56; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Arise," *International Security*, Spring 1993, pp. 5–51.

³ Benjamin J. Cohen, "Return to Normalcy? Global Economic Policy at the End of the Century," in *Eagle Adrift: American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century*, ed. Robert J. Lieber (New York: Longman, 1997), p. 74.

⁴ Mitterrand died in 1996. The passage is from a biography by Georges-Marc Benamou, *Le dernier Mitterrand* (Paris: Plon, 1997), and is quoted in Conrad Black, "Britain's Atlantic Option and America's Stake," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 22.

⁵ Vedrine and Chirac were quoted in Charles Krauthammer, "Not for Moi, Thanks," *Washington Post*, Nov. 26, 1999. The French foreign minister had used the word "hyperpuissance" to describe American power, though President Chirac later disavowed the term. Chirac's more restrained language can be found in an interview with Craig R. Whitney, "With a 'Don't Be Vexed' Air, Chirac Assesses U.S.," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1999.

of NATO, the Americans dominated the intervention, providing the great majority of the air sorties in the bombing campaign, 80 percent of the precision-guided munitions, 95 percent of the cruise missiles, and virtually all of the command, control, intelligence, and targeting for the allied effort. With the end of the bombing campaign in June 1999 and the introduction of NATO peacekeepers, Europeans assumed much of the responsibility for the region, but as NATO secretary general Lord Robertson observed, "There are around two million people in European armies in uniform today, and yet the European allies had to struggle hard to get 40,000 to go and serve in Kosovo."⁶

In response, EU leaders agreed at their December 1999 Helsinki summit to establish, by 2003, a force of 60,000 troops for crisis intervention backed by the necessary command staff, intelligence, and decision-making authority. In principle, this would facilitate a more balanced European role within NATO, and the decision has been widely trumpeted—both by those who embrace it as a long overdue assertion of Europe's role and by those who point with alarm to the danger of a rupture in the Atlantic partnership.

EU statements actually contain contradictory elements, reflecting persistent internal differences about whether the effort to build a European security and defense identity should develop in close partnership with NATO and the United States or in an altogether more independent capacity. For example, at their June 1999 Cologne summit, leaders of the fifteen EU countries avoided emphasis on the NATO connection and emphasized autonomy in defense, whereas the December 1999 Helsinki meeting produced language more consistent with Atlantic partnership. Not surprisingly, the relationship between a nascent European military command structure and NATO has yet to be defined. In contrast to French views, British, Dutch, and to a substantial extent German leaders see this European force as remaining closely tied to NATO and subject to deployment on its own only in cases where the United States is unwilling or unable to act. Thus, Prime Minister Tony Blair has been quite explicit in rejecting Conservative Party criticisms that the proposed military arrangements will endanger NATO's cohesion and effectiveness. In Blair's words, "NATO remains the cornerstone of our defence."⁷ Nonetheless, competing European conceptions about the autonomy of this military capability remain very real.

Another recent defense issue creating strains in the Atlantic relationship is national missile defense (NMD). American planning for possible development of a system to defend against the launch of small numbers of ICBMs by states such as Iraq, Iran, or North Korea has been subjected to bitter criticism in much of Western Europe. The opponents complain that NMD

⁶ Craig R. Whitney, "U.S. and NATO Allies Divided Over Defense Needs," *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1999.

⁷ Transcript of interview given by Prime Minister Tony Blair to John Searegant for the BBC R4 "Today" program, Dec. 10, 1999, in Helsinki. British Embassy press release, Washington, D.C., Dec. 14, 1999 (<http://www.BritainUSA.com>).

would divorce America's security from Europe's by leaving the continent vulnerable, violate the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and needlessly provoke the Russians and Chinese into building up their long-range nuclear forces. Legitimate questions can also be raised about the technological feasibility of NMD and whether Russia will ultimately agree to U.S.-inspired revisions of the ABM Treaty (as they have in the past on a series of technical matters). But still, the volume and intensity of European criticism are noteworthy. Actual development and deployment would, in any case, not take place until 2005 at the earliest. It could also be argued that successful deployment, by reducing the risk of blackmail from a rogue state that might otherwise threaten to launch nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, would maintain America's ability to deter threats to Europe and other areas of vital interest and thus promote rather than undercut stability.

In addition to security issues, trade disputes have buffeted the alliance. European protection of agriculture, American use of antidumping laws, and European defiance of World Trade Organization (WTO) rulings in America's favor on beef and bananas have all contributed to an adversarial atmosphere. This has become evident in a number of ways, as at the unsuccessful WTO summit in December 1999 in Seattle, where American and European leaders found themselves at odds not only on long-standing issues, but also on President Clinton's sudden embrace of labor and environmental provisions as demanded by the thousands of protesters who demonstrated against the WTO. Additional disputes exist over aircraft exports, off-shore corporations that provide tax breaks for U.S. exporters, and various economic sanctions on third parties. The latter arise from American laws that impose penalties on foreign companies that do business with Iran and Cuba, and these sanctions have been widely criticized in Europe as unacceptable infringements of sovereign foreign activities.

In sum, tensions in the Atlantic relationship and predictions of an impending divorce are based on real differences. But do they signal an imminent rupture between America and Europe?

The Bonds That Endure

For over half a century, and despite multiple sources of friction, the U.S.-European alliance has remained remarkably durable. A decade after the end of the Cold War, the existing bonds continue to underpin this relationship because they embody fundamental realities of power and shared national interests. Four of these realities and interests stand out as sustaining the alliance.

1. *A hedge against security uncertainties.* For Europe, NATO provides insurance against future security risks in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Paramount among these uncertain-

ties are long-term anxieties about Russia. While peaceful evolution toward a stable, democratic, and economically open Russian society continues to be a widely shared hope, the future remains uncertain. An impoverished and dispirited Russian population does not in the short run provide the basis for a security threat comparable to that of the old USSR, but the longer-term course of Russia is an open question, since its desperate population could embrace a nationalist demagogue intent on asserting Russia's place in Europe and the world in ways that would threaten its neighbors.

A "Weimar Russia" scenario appears increasingly unlikely, and the December 1999 Duma election and March 2000 presidential election of Vladimir Putin seemed to show that the appeal of extremist parties remains limited. Nonetheless, appeals to restore order and status are evident, and the renewed military campaign in Chechnya has evoked a chauvinistic response among much of the Russian population. Moreover, while the economic and social disarray of Russia is very real, this does not mean that a rapid reassertion of military strength is impossible. One need only recall Germany's sudden resurgence between 1933 and 1939 under Hitler, the Soviet Union's in the 1920s and '30s following the ravages of revolution and civil war, and the USSR's again after 1945 despite the vast death and destruction suffered in World War II.

Nor is Russia itself the only conceivable peril. Instability throughout much of the former Yugoslavia, uncertainties about the countries of the southern Mediterranean, and dangers stemming from the Middle East and Persian Gulf all represent potential risks. Upheaval along the continent's eastern or southern periphery, whether from economic collapse, ethnic conflict, or interstate war, could send waves of refugees flooding into Europe. Finally, the diffusion of weapons of mass destruction, including missile technology and nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, poses potential risks to Europeans. To be sure, these threats are all more diffuse and conjectural than the Soviet threat during the Cold War, but they are not negligible and provide a reason for European countries to retain their alliance with the United States as a form of insurance. To deter or defend against such threats, continuing allied cooperation in the military, economic, and political spheres is likely to remain necessary.

2. *American primacy.* Closely connected to Europe's need for an American security partnership is the fact of U.S. primacy. Contrary to the decline of American power that seemed evident in the aftermath of Vietnam and the oil shocks of the 1970s, the United States has emerged at the start of the twenty-first century with unprecedented power, whether measured by military strength, technology, economic dynamism, international competitiveness, or cultural influence.⁸ Only the United States possesses the means to

⁸ William Wohlforth provides a compelling argument for the robustness of American primacy in "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Summer 1999, pp. 5–41. Coral Bell envisions this primacy lasting

project power abroad in a decisive and compelling manner. Since the end of the Cold War, the decisiveness of American strength has been evident both when it was deployed (as in Kuwait, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo) and when it was withheld (as in Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia prior to 1995). What is more, American primacy may even be increasing rather than decreasing. As the 1991 war against Iraq and the 1999 bombing campaign in Kosovo demonstrated, not only does the United States possess the capacity to move forces by sea and air across great distances on a timely basis, but it also enjoys wide advantages in precision-guided munitions, stealth technology, satellite communication, command and control, and the whole panoply of forces needed to prevail in the air and on the modern battlefield, even as it minimizes casualties to its own troops.

In addition, over more than half a century, America's defense commitment to Europe "solved" the German problem and most Europeans (including Germans) want the United States to remain. The post-World War II miracle of Franco-German rapprochement and European unity had multiple causes, but the single most important explanation may well be the dominant role of the United States on the European continent. The American security umbrella, established to deter the Soviet Union, eliminated the imperative for the countries of Western Europe to pursue traditional rivalries versus each other.

From the time of German unification in 1871 until 1945, the problem of German power plagued the European continent. A unified Germany was significantly more powerful and dynamic than any of its neighbors, and especially after the departure of Bismarck in 1890 this made for a highly unstable balance of power. Ultimately, Germany's defeat and division, followed by the U.S. commitment to Europe, had the beneficial effect of superseding conflict among the leading prewar European powers. The pattern of interstate conflict that had marked the European state system for three centuries after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 thus was transformed. Because of the U.S. role, the West European system became one in which states no longer anticipated or prepared for the possibility of war with one another. Germany's enmeshment in a web of European economic, security, and political institutions, including the EU and NATO, solidified this transformation, but the continued American presence adds important reassurance, especially in the aftermath of Germany's reunification. Moreover, those reassured are not only Germany's neighbors, but even many Germans themselves.⁹

"another four decades or so." See "American Ascendancy and the Pretense of Concert," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 55.

⁹ See, especially, Joseph Joffe, "Where Germany Has Never Been Before," *The National Interest*, Summer 1999, pp. 45–53; and Anton DePorte, *Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979).

3. *Europe's foreign and defense policy vacuum.* For more than a quarter-century, Europe's quest for a common foreign policy has failed to deliver meaningful results, and progress toward a European defense has proved even more elusive. There are multiple reasons for this lack of integration. Foreign and defense policies exist in a sphere of high politics and national sovereignty in which most states are reluctant to relinquish autonomy. France, one of the most ardent proponents of a European identity separate from America, has often been the most assertive of its own foreign policy autonomy, even when this insistence contradicts the positions of its European partners. French independence has been evident in numerous cases ranging from the oil shocks of the 1970s to postcolonial Africa, the former Yugoslavia, and U.N. sanctions on Iraq. Moreover, differences among the countries of the EU are often wider than between Europe and the United States. For example, in 1991, in response to the increasing turmoil in Yugoslavia and the unwillingness of the Bush administration to intervene in another crisis in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, the president of the European Council, Foreign Minister Jacques Poos of Luxembourg, proclaimed that "the age of Europe has dawned."¹⁰ But European division as well as weakness left the EU unable to act, thus compounding Yugoslavia's tragedy. Kosovo was another case in point, with Britain more assertive than the United States in pushing for the use of force, while Greece was sympathetic toward the Serbs.

The projected expansion of the EU is likely to widen these differences even as it adds to the number of countries supportive of close ties with the United States. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and especially Poland have painful historical memories of their treatment at the hands of more powerful neighbors, and they have good reason to look to the United States for a credible security guarantee. The Baltic states have even stronger motivation and, further down the waiting list for EU membership, Turkey also has good reasons to value its ties to the United States.

Military spending provides another major obstacle to the emergence of a credible European defense. At the start of the twenty-first century, the United States devotes 3.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to defense—half of its percentage at the height of the Reagan buildup of the mid-1980s, but in absolute terms dwarfing the spending of all its likely competitors combined. European NATO members spend only 2.1 percent of their combined GDP on defense, and with far less effect than U.S. spending because the European effort is divided among fifteen separate defense budgets and much is wasted in duplication. In addition, while Europe deploys approximately 50 percent more troops than the United States, its large forces (many of them reliant on conscripts) are more suited to traditional land

¹⁰ Quoted in Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York: Free Press, 1999), p. 109.

warfare than to the specialized foreign interventions and high-technology weaponry characteristic of twenty-first-century conflict.

As if these were not sufficient obstacles to Europe's going it alone, there remains the problem of fragmented European defense industries: the larger states seek to protect their own corporate champions while often excluding more efficient foreign producers. For example, there is just one manufacturer of tanks in the United States, but there have been as many as six among the countries of the EU. Despite a wave of mergers in European defense industries, the problem remains years away from effective resolution. Moreover, acquiring a full-fledged modern military requires a comprehensive, integrated set of advanced capabilities and systems. Under heavy pressure from France and other European partners, Britain has recently opted to purchase the Meteor air-to-air missile system being developed by an Anglo-French consortium. When (and if) it becomes operational in the latter half of the decade, its manufacturers claim it will be superior to the combat-proven American AMRAAM missile.¹¹ But even if these claims prove out, Europe will remain far behind the United States in air warfare capabilities. Air superiority requires the integration of the most modern high-performance aircraft and avionics, weapons systems, surveillance, satellites, real-time intelligence, communications, targeting information, sophisticated radar, and battle-management systems. In the absence of this complete package, the impact of any one weapon is minimized.

The types of military systems required for Europe to achieve effective modern capabilities demand not only a more rational use of existing funds, but a higher level of funding altogether. Although France and Britain spend 2.8 percent of their GDP on defense, Germany—the European country with the largest population and economy—spends just 1.5 percent.¹² Moreover, the imperatives of economic modernization and budget deficits have produced pressure for lower rather than higher spending. Thus, the government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder adopted a budget for the year 2000 that cuts DM 2 billion (\$930 million) from the DM 47 billion (\$22.3 billion) previously planned, and projects additional reductions totaling DM 1.7 billion over the next three years. Meanwhile, a commission headed by former president Richard von Weizsäcker has recommended restructuring the German army. Its report, issued in May 2000, would make the Bundeswehr smaller, more mobile, and better equipped, enabling it to take part more effectively in

¹¹ Meteor is being developed by a consortium of the French company Matra and British Aerospace, in a collaborative venture with Germany, Italy, and Spain. AMRAAM is produced by Raytheon. See David Cracknell, "Cohen Begs Britain Not to Purchase Euro Missile," *Sunday Telegraph* (London), May 14, 2000; and British Embassy press release, "Defence Procurement: The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence," May 16, 2000 (<http://www.BritainUSA.com>).

¹² Data for 1998 from *The Military Balance, 1999–2000* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1999), p. 300.

NATO missions, international peacekeeping, and the planned EU force. The von Weizsäcker proposals include a reduction of 100,000 troops to an overall level of 240,000 and controversial provisions to reduce sharply the number of draftees. Despite cuts in personnel, the requirements for mobility and equipment would cost an additional DM 2–3 billion per year, and the added expenditures face daunting political obstacles.¹³

Elsewhere in Europe, in the absence of immediate and unambiguous security threats, political and economic pressures are far more likely to cause decreases than increases in defense budgets. (This is yet another reason why Europeans tend to be dismayed by the possibility of missile defense, with the high costs that would be imposed if they had to deploy a system of their own.) As a result, the achievement of a truly credible European military corps remains far from certain, and any force that may emerge will have capabilities well short of the robust, independent body envisaged. For example, Europe would still be unable to carry out an operation on the scale of the American-led Kosovo action of 1999.

4. *Mutual interest in international economic stability.* Euro-American economic relations are simultaneously competitive and co-operative. They are competitive in their rivalry for export markets and commercial advantage, but they remain cooperative insofar as all parties share a deep interest in preserving the successful functioning of existing arrangements for trade, investment, financial flows, and the international economic institutions that sustain them.

**Most
importantly,
Europe and the
United States
share basic
values.**

In recent decades, the Europeans have found themselves increasingly squeezed between large and competitive American firms, on the one hand, and the challenge of Japan and the most rapidly developing Asian economies, on the other. Until recently, European economic restructuring lagged, and domestic pressures from sectors threatened by competition intensified. Despite sharp disagreements, however, Europe and the United States find themselves needing to cooperate through the International Monetary Fund, Group of Seven, WTO, and other groupings, not only to resolve mutual problems, but to cope with global financial and economic dangers. Europe and the United States also have a huge stake in each other's economic health, as demonstrated by the vast sums of investment in both directions and the transatlantic mergers in many industries, including those involving high technology and the information revolution.

These four realities provide powerful motives for continued cooperation. Moreover, they are reinforced by more diffuse but no less real commonalities of experience and values. Although Western leaders who shared

¹³ For details on the von Weizsäcker proposals, see "Marching Orders," *The Economist*, May 27, 2000, pp. 51–52; and *The Week in Germany*, German Information Service, May 26, 2000 (twig@germany-info.org).

the history of establishing the great postwar institutions have passed from the scene and even the events of the Cold War are becoming a rapidly receding memory, other factors are at work that tend to sustain cooperation among policy elites, including Europeans' easy familiarity with the United States through travel, language, and culture. The information revolution has fostered increasing communication and contact across a wide range of activities. To be sure, not all these contacts are positive, as reflected in complaints about mass culture, "Disneyfied" entertainment (Euro-Disney has been described as a "cultural Chernobyl" by disgruntled French intellectuals¹⁴), McDonald's, and the like. Resentment about American predominance in these spheres is very real, but complaints have been evident in some form throughout the past half-century and have often been voiced as much by cultural critics in America as those in Europe. Moreover, at the popular level, attraction to (or at least fascination with) American mass culture, clothing styles, music, entertainment, leisure, and language has increasingly spread throughout Europe, especially among younger generations.

Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that Europe and the United States continue to share basic values such as liberal democracy, open economies (albeit in different variations), the rule of law, the dignity of the individual, and Western notions of morality and rationality. This underlying commonality of Western civilizational values remains fundamental, even (or especially) in an era of globalization.

Quarrels, But No Divorce, in the Twenty-first Century

Advocates of separation do exist, and not only in Europe. In the United States, the argument has been made that the end of the Cold War requires that the United States begin to disengage from its European security commitments.¹⁵ For some, this choice is based on the proposition that American primacy will itself cause other states to balance against the United States and that it is pointless to seek to preserve this unique status. Others fear that America will become overextended if it tries to maintain, not to mention expand, its Cold War commitments and levels of defense spending.¹⁶ Still others predict a domestic backlash unless the United States drastically recasts the Atlantic relationship and reduces its direct role.¹⁷ Finally, a few unabashed isolationists advocate U.S. withdrawal from Europe on the grounds that a great-power threat to America's vital interests no longer exists there.

¹⁴ The term is quoted in William Drodziak, "L'Etat C'est Mouse," *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 1992.

¹⁵ See especially Stephen Walt, "The Ties That Fray," *The National Interest*, Winter 1998/99, pp. 3–11; and my rejoinder, *ibid.*, Spring 1999, p. 114.

¹⁶ For example, Kenneth Waltz, "Globalization and Governance," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Dec. 1999, pp. 693–700.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Charles A. Kupchan, "In Defence of European Defence: An American Perspective," *Survival*, Summer 2000, pp. 16–32.

Will the Atlantic alliance survive in the face of its critics? During the first decade of the post-Cold War era the relationship has proved to be robust, but a decade is not a long time and there are several factors working against partnership, not only in security, but in economics and politics as well. First and foremost is the absence of a major, unambiguous, common threat. When disputes arise in the alliance, the need to find common solutions is less compelling. European observers tend to see the United States as increasingly unilateral in its actions and insufficiently willing to consult and take into account their concerns and sensibilities. American observers in turn complain that Europe is getting a free ride since it is unable to muster sufficient military forces for peacekeeping operations and humanitarian interventions, leaving the United States to bear the greatest burden when intervention is needed. Paradoxically, however, Europe's first steps toward increased "burden sharing" through a European force capability have caused Americans to express concern over the danger that Europe will become too autonomous.

Domestic politics aggravate this problem. Although American opinion remains internationalist overall, with 61 percent of the public and 96 percent of elites favoring an active role in world affairs, cross-cutting cleavages exist within both the Democratic and Republican parties on issues ranging from NATO expansion to free trade to humanitarian intervention.¹⁸ Some on the political Left oppose free trade and demand that resources spent on defense be reallocated to unmet domestic needs. On portions of the political Right, traditional isolationist sentiments are evident, some echoing nativist views more typical of the 1930s (as in the case of Pat Buchanan).¹⁹ Elsewhere, one detects a level of indifference toward foreign policy and hence a reduced priority for foreign commitments and spending on international affairs. This is evident in opinion polls that indicate the low priority of foreign policy despite voters' support for international engagement. Accordingly, Congress has been less willing to appropriate funds for foreign aid and the international affairs budget (down almost 40 percent in real terms since 1985) or support multilateral approaches to foreign policy problems.

More broadly, the end of the Cold War brought an end to a period of half a century (1941–91) in which the United States faced critical foreign

¹⁸ Data from John E. Reilly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1999* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999). Since 1943, the American public has favored internationalism over isolationism. This margin has never been less than three-to-two, and since the late 1980s it has been more than two-to-one. Ole Holsti, "Public Opinion," in *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the 21st Century*, ed. Robert J. Lieber (Prentice-Hall and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, forthcoming, 2001.)

¹⁹ In principle, a majority of Americans support the growth of trade, though its benefits are viewed as barely outweighing the costs. See Steven Kull, *Americans on Globalization: A Study of US Public Attitudes* (College Park, Md.: Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, Nov. 16, 1999).

threats to its vital interests and values. The domestic results of this transition include an erosion of presidential power and a reassertion of the Madisonian features of the American political system: separation of powers, checks and balances, divided government, and federalism. Astute observers of America, from Alexis de Tocqueville to Seymour Martin Lipset, have traced these qualities to America's lack of a feudal past and its "nonconformist" religious tradition, and described how, during the nineteenth century, American liberalism came to emphasize individualism and antistatism. As Lipset has observed, Americans prefer a competitive, individualistic society with equality of opportunity and effective but weak government.²⁰ Taken together, these elements have served American democracy well over the centuries. However, in the absence of an external threat, they tend to hamper any administration's capacity to develop and carry out a foreign policy that responds to the major tasks facing the United States.

Does U.S. cooperation with Europe therefore require a common threat? The answer may well be that it does, but the disappearance of a threat has not been complete. In addition, cooperation can be driven by a shared interest in international economic stability and growth, as well as the need for collaborative responses to economic crises. Institutional ties also provide a basis for ongoing cooperation, as do shared values. Though liberal values in economics and politics do not preclude disputes, they do prevent them from escalating beyond a point that would disrupt existing institutions or relationships, let alone lead to open conflict.

Finally, there remains Europe's own incapacity in foreign and defense policy. In the absence of effective institutions and political means for timely coordination of foreign policy and the use of force, Europe remains reliant upon the United States. However much European leaders may deplore this lack and call for means to redress it, the likelihood of dramatic change remains remote. Calls for a "Grand Bargain" that would offer Europe more decision-making power in exchange for carrying more of the defense burden are almost certainly beside the point. A major reason is the political improbability of European defense budget increases to 3 percent of GDP, as called for by one recent proposal, in order to decrease the technology gap.²¹ Another key factor is the continuation of the underlying division among Europeans themselves. While there is general support for an improved European military capability and a good deal of practical support at the working level, Britain and France continue to hold fundamentally different

²⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, "Still the Exceptional Nation?" *The Wilson Quarterly*, Winter 2000, p. 45.

²¹ John C. Hulsman, "A Grand Bargain with Europe: Preserving NATO for the 21st Century," *Background* no. 1360 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, Apr. 17, 2000). Also see Kupchan, "In Defence of European Defence." I am broadly in agreement with Walter McDougall's criticism of visionary proposals for NATO-EU collaboration, and with his conclusion that "America and Europe are nonetheless stuck with each other." See "Editor's Column," *Orbis*, Winter 2000, pp. 4, 11.

views about Atlantic and European priorities. Finally, projected expansion of the EU is likely to reduce further the likelihood of an overall European consensus. In policy terms, therefore, the most practical course of action for all parties is to sustain U.S.-European collaboration and adapt it as needed to emerging challenges. What is certainly not needed is a costly divorce.



The Continuity Behind the Change in Korea

by Victor D. Cha

Change in Korea” used to be an oxymoron.¹ For decades one could assert without fear of contradiction that nothing had changed on the Korean peninsula since the 1953 Panmunjom armistice that ended the Korean War. The Cold War standoff among the major powers in the region and the spectacular estrangement between the two Koreas precluded any shift in the political balance. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Korea remained conspicuously frozen, seemingly locked in a Cold War time warp.² Hence, conventional theories explaining this warp went unchallenged: the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) was a reclusive, opaque, and threatening regime; unification could come only through the victory of one side over the other (*songong t’ongil*); and the U.S. alliance with the Republic of Korea (ROK) remained the bedrock of security on the peninsula. A bizarre form of stability thus grew out of a dangerous and inertial situation.

Then, in the space of five years, a chain of unprecedented events took place. DPRK leader Kim Il-sung died in 1994, leaving a bankrupt economy to his even more mysterious and untested son, Kim Jong-il. North Korea’s famine conditions and a burgeoning ballistic missile capability raised concerns that the stalemate on the peninsula might end in a North Korean implosion or explosion. Tensions over the DPRK’s nuclear program approached the brink of war in June 1994, and conflict was averted only by the Agreed Framework under which the United States would assist (and bankroll) a peaceful DPRK energy program. During this same period, South Korea’s

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Foreign Policy Research Institute conference “Flashpoints in Asia,” Philadelphia, May 12, 2000. The author thanks Avery Goldstein, Roy Kim, Samuel Kim, and Alfred Wilhelm for comments.

² As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once stated, “I’ve always described the DMZ as being on the other side of the moon. . . . It’s the last vestige of the Cold War.” “Albright to Assess Post-Summit Koreas,” *Korea Times*, June 21, 2000.

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postwar development peaked in 1997 with membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but suffered badly a year later during the Asian financial crisis. The ROK's president Kim Dae-jung, meanwhile, embarked on a new "sunshine" policy promoting dialogue with the North and culminating in the unprecedented summit between the two Korean leaders in Pyongyang in June 2000. The United States promptly lifted some of its sanctions against the DPRK, and Japan sought to resume talks on normalization of relations. Jubilation and talk of peaceful unification filled the air in Seoul, along with murmurs about the "anachronistic" U.S. alliance. According to polls, 90 percent of South Koreans now have a positive image of North Korea and its leadership, and an astounding 53 percent dismiss the possibility of another DPRK invasion.³

What is one to make of these changes? Are the two Koreas close to unification and an end to the Cold War stalemate at last? Are many of the conventional truisms we have accepted about the Korean peninsula for so many years suddenly on the verge of being overturned? As one Korean scholar asked, are we at one of those critical moments when everything familiar melts into air?⁴ Or does Korea's characteristic constancy still obtain on the peninsula? To assess what has changed and what has remained constant, we must begin by debunking three "myths" that have emerged in the recent reassessments of conventional security and political thinking. These myths relate to the nature of the North Korean threat, the unification issue, and the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Reassessing the North Korean Threat

"We've gone from bad to worse" is a good way to typify the thinking on the evolution of the North Korean threat. What had been the threat of conventional ground invasion during the Cold War has been supplemented in the post-Cold War era by the potential threat of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), while no apparent relaxation of the DPRK's aggressive intentions has occurred and its regime is as secretive, unpredictable, and evidently irrational as ever.

This is a credible assessment, but appears inconsistent with the policy debates that rage in Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul over whether to engage or contain North Korea.⁵ That such a vigorous debate exists reveals an

³ Choson Ilbo-Korea Gallup and Hankook Ilbo-Media Research polling results reported in "Summit talks greatly improve image of Kim Jong-il among South Koreans," *Korea Herald*, June 19, 2000.

⁴ Doug Struck, "In the South, One Korea is Distant Goal," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2000.

⁵ Arguments against engagement focus on its futility in the face of DPRK intransigence. According to this view, the North will interpret conciliatory gestures from the South as signs of weakness, which will only reinforce the position of hardliners in Pyongyang. Cooperative behavior is therefore best elicited through containment policies that, in conjunction with the North's dire internal situation, press the regime to capitulate. Pro-engagement arguments are based on the estimation that hard-line containment is likely to elicit dangerous reactions from a

absence of agreement on the nature of the DPRK threat, which, in actuality, is substantively different today than during the Cold War. If an adversary's threat is measured as an aggregate of intentions, military and economic capabilities, domestic political stability, and allied support, then the North Korean threat was indeed formidable during the Cold War.⁶ South Korea faced a well-trained DPRK conventional force supported by an economy that, according to CIA figures, rivaled if not surpassed its southern counterpart and was buttressed by the economic patronage and security guarantees of China and the Soviet Union. Following the Cold War, however, the threat as defined in these terms has been greatly reduced. The DPRK's military training and readiness have been undercut sharply by fuel shortages and falling morale, its economy is bankrupt, and it has lost its Soviet and Chinese patronage. The upshot is that the traditional DPRK threat assessment has been rendered virtually obsolete. U.S. and ROK forces are more than capable of deterring and, if necessary, rolling back any North Korean advance, thereby making a North Korean attack an act of suicide.⁷

Does this mean we can relax, as some urge us to do?⁸ On the contrary, threats still exist and renewed hostility is still possible. But the nature of the problem has changed along two dimensions: proliferation and bargaining leverage. Regarding the former, the DPRK ballistic missile program since the early 1980s has produced missile systems that demonstrate progress beyond most expectations (see Table 1). Despite its dire material constraints, the North accomplished this largely through the reverse-engineering of SCUD-B missile technology acquired from the Soviet Union.⁹ The August 1998 test flight of the Taepodong-1 over Japan demonstrated an unexpected leap in intermediate-range ballistic missile technology (although a three-stage payload launch failed). In defiance of Missile Technology Control Regime norms, North Korea has been the most active producer and provider of SCUD missiles and related technology to Iran, Syria, and Pakistan, and concerns

northern regime facing dire straits. The primary obstacle to North-South dialogue is no longer the Cold War, but the legacies of four decades of mutual distrust and animosity. Conciliatory acts help to dissipate these barriers and open a road to confidence-building, whereas containment reinforces such barriers. See Nicholas Eberstadt, *The End of North Korea* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute Press, 1999); Leon Sigal, *Disarming Strangers* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Chung-in Moon and David Steinberg eds., *The Kim Dae-Jung Government's Sunshine Policy* (Seoul: Yonsei Press, 1999).

⁶ On the measurement of threats and capabilities, see Stephen Walt, *Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987); and Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival" *International Security*, Winter 1997/98, pp. 36–73.

⁷ Contrary to popular reactions in South Korea these days expressing no fear of renewed hostilities on the peninsula in the aftermath of the June 2000 North-South summit, what has rendered the likelihood of conflict less probable is the robust deterrence provided by U.S. and ROK forces, not the positive atmosphere engendered by the summit.

⁸ On this view, see David Kang, "We Should Not be Afraid of North Koreans," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2000.

⁹ The North's first indigenous operational missile, the Nodong series, derives from SCUD technology. The Taepodong combines the Nodong and SCUD.

Table 1 Ballistic Missile Capabilities

	Ballistic Missiles	Range/Payload	Status
North Korea	SCUD-B	300 km 1000 kg	operational, in production
	SCUD-C	500 km 700 kg	operational, in production
	Nodong-1	1000 km 700–1000 kg	in development, tested
	Nodong-2	1500 km 770 kg	in development
	Taepodong-1	1500–2000 km 1000 kg	tested
	Taepodong-2	3500–6000 km 1000 kg	in development
South Korea	Nike-Hercules-1	180 km 300 kg	operational; modified SAM
	Nike-Hercules-2	250 km 300 kg	in development; modified SAM

Sources: Compiled from data from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies website (<http://cns.miis.edu/cns/projects/eanp/pubs/chinanuc/bmsl.htm>); Joseph Cirincione, "Assessing the *Nonproliferation Review*, Spring 2000; and William Carpenter and David Wiencek, eds., *Asian Security Handbook* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 67.

abound regarding future proliferation of longer-range systems.¹⁰ The DPRK has also made strenuous efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Originating in atomic energy agreements with the Soviet Union dating from the 1960s, Pyongyang's nuclear industry became capable of supporting a complete nuclear fuel cycle by the 1980s. A small nuclear research reactor contributed to the North's basic understanding of nuclear physics, engineering, and reactor operations, and subsequent reactors (an operational five-megawatt reactor, along with fifty- and 200-megawatt reactors under construction) presaged an annual reprocessed plutonium production capacity that could sustain at least ten nuclear weapons. While these activities remain frozen and are subject to dismantling as a result of the 1994 Agreed Framework, suspicions linger regarding the North's plutonium reprocessing history, alleged covert activities outside Yongbyon, and possible possession of crude nuclear devices.¹¹

The second subtle but significant change with regard to peninsular security involves a new logic of deterrence. The most worrying contingency is no longer all-out invasion, but rather limited acts of belligerence by the

¹⁰ For example, Pakistan's Ghauri and Shaheen series are derivative of Nodong technology. For further discussions, see Evan Medeiros, "Northeast Asia in 1999: Current Threats to Nonproliferation Regimes," CNS Occasional Paper 3, n.d., Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

¹¹ Concerns abound regarding possible reprocessing activities in 1989 and May–June 1994 that would have provided the DPRK with enough weapons-grade plutonium for several nuclear weapons. Alexandre Mansourov, "The Origins, Evolution and Current Politics of the North Korean Nuclear Program," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 1995.

North to serve the purpose of coercive bargaining. By virtually every calculation of the military balance on the Korean peninsula today, U.S.-ROK defense capabilities overwhelm those of the DPRK, rendering nil the probability of a successful second DPRK offensive. Moreover, standing U.S. war plans promise that any attempt to replay the invasion of June 1950 would be met by a decisive counteroffensive aimed at extinguishing the North Korean regime.¹² What is less clear is how effective the U.S.-ROK strategy is in dealing with *limited* uses of force by the North to improve its bargaining position. Since the end of the Cold War, Pyongyang's *modus operandi* has been to engage in belligerent or disruptive acts, usually in order to highlight a grievance of some kind. While they certainly raise concerns about escalation, such pin-pricks do not warrant all-out retaliation. Thus, Washington and Seoul are manipulated into the awkward position of wanting to punish North Korea for its misbehavior, but constrained by fears of provoking an unnecessary and costly larger conflict. As a result, they usually issue a token denouncement of the DPRK transgression, but still come to the negotiating table prepared to make concessions that will reduce tensions. From Pyongyang's perspective, the objective of such misbehavior is not to win some military advantage, but precisely to initiate a coercive bargaining process that eventuates in an outcome more favorable to the North. This is a dangerous and destabilizing strategy, but it is the sort of high-stakes game that Pyongyang plays adeptly. What is more, it is rational, since the anticipated benefits of changing the status quo outweigh the risks and costs.¹³

The North's bargaining strategy is dangerous, destabilizing, and rational.

The naval altercation on the west coast of the peninsula in June 1999 offered an ominous precedent. Several North Korean patrol boats violated South Korean waters, prompting the ROK navy to ram the trespassers and initiate a firefight that left twenty to thirty North Koreans dead. This constituted one of the largest losses of life in an altercation since the 1953 armistice and was a clear demonstration of the ROK's superior naval combat capabilities and training. What grabbed the headlines were the military clash itself and subsequent criticism of the evidently futile sunshine policy. But few really stopped to ask why the North took such actions, and some just assumed that the northern regime either underestimated the ROK's naval capabilities and resolve or else acted irrationally. But the most likely possibility was that this North Korean provocation was designed to extort concessions from a fearful ROK and its foreign

¹² Richard Halloran, "New Warplan Calls for Invasion of North Korea," *Global Beat*, Nov. 14, 1998 (<http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/asia/Halloran111498.html>); Chong-hun Yi, "Realizing the Unification of North and South" (in Korean), *SISA Journal*, Dec. 24, 1998, pp. 44–46.

¹³ See Victor Cha, "Engaging North Korea Credibly," *Survival*, Summer 2000, pp. 136–55; and Victor Cha, "Is There Still a Rational North Korean Option for War?" *Security Dialogue*, Dec. 1998, pp. 477–90.

patrons regarding, in this instance, the validity of the Northern Limitation Line, the maritime boundary between South and North Korea.¹⁴ In other such incidents the North might lob several artillery shells or one chemically armed short-range missile into the South—provocations too minor to prompt all-out war, but serious enough to raise the incentive for Seoul to give ground on one or another issue.

The upshot of this for U.S. security interests is that the current threat posed by North Korea is more complex and problematic than during the Cold War. While deterrence of a traditional ground invasion is still essential, the more salient question concerns what, in addition to baseline containment, is needed to deal with the problems of proliferation and coercive bargaining. Current policy emphasizes engagement layered on top of containment and nonproliferation sanctions, while alternative policies include containment-plus-isolation and containment-plus-coercion with regard to the proliferation threat.¹⁵ But whatever one's preference, the point to be noted is that the June 2000 summit has not affected the threat assessment at all. The potential threats, hence the need to address them, have not vanished, despite the summit's positive dynamics and their soothing effects on South Korean public opinion. The true test of whether the new confidence is justified is not a function of warm toasts and embraces, but the extent to which material improvements in the North's situation increase the costs of coercive bargaining, thereby rendering the tactic unattractive.

Unification as Holy Grail and Unholy Nightmare

The embrace between Kim Jong-il and Kim Dae-jung in Pyongyang was a cathartic event that filled a void in the Korean psyche and national identity, raising hopes that reconciliation and even reunification were finally imminent. How close are we to Korea's holy grail?

In the post-Cold War era, the spectrum of discussion about unification has ranged from "hard landing" scenarios in which the South absorbs an imploded DPRK (popular in the early 1990s) to the "soft landing" scenario of

¹⁴ The Northern Limitation Line was unilaterally declared by the United Nations Command after the 1950–53 Korean War, and for the United States and ROK represents the de facto maritime border. The DPRK does not recognize the line and claims as its own the resource- and fish-rich waters less than 12 miles away from its western coast, which are also less than 12 miles from South Korean-owned islands in the West Sea.

¹⁵ The policy tools advocated by Washington and Seoul have been outlined in the Kim Dae-jung government's sunshine policy and in the U.S. policy review of North Korea completed by former Secretary of Defense William Perry. The unclassified portion of the review can be found online (<http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eap/991012-northkorea-rpt.html>). For criticisms see the congressional North Korea Advisory Group's website (<http://www.house.gov/international-relations/nkag/report.htm>); "Sunshine" or Moonshine?" editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 2, 1999; Chae-jin Lee, "U.S. Policy Toward North Korea: The Dilemma of Containment and Engagement," *Korea and World Affairs*, Fall 1996, pp. 357–79; and Fred Ikle, "U.S. Folly May Start Another Korean War," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 12, 1998.

a controlled process of phased integration.¹⁶ But two tenets have been almost religiously accepted by all. First, unification must come through the independent efforts of Koreans without interference or obstruction from external powers. Implicit in this view is that the major powers are fundamentally opposed to unification and seek to keep Korea down. Secondly, the division of the country since 1945 is an aberration for this homogenous nation and must inevitably end.

The first of these tenets, which has been an underlying principle of unification agreed upon by the two Koreas dating back to the 1972 joint communiqué and restated in every subsequent meeting, requires analysis. The notion of unification through independence (*chajusong*) is in principle unassailable, but in practice highly unlikely. The peninsula's location in Northeast Asia and Korea's status as a small power surrounded by larger ones make Korea geostrategically critical to the major powers.¹⁷ One need only look at the past century, during which the United States, Japan, China, and Russia all fought at least one major war over control of the peninsula. So long as states vie for power and influence in the region, therefore, Korea will suffer the fate of the "shrimp crushed between whales." If the peninsula were located at the North Pole, unification through independent means might be possible, but its pivotal position is such that major-power interests are bound to be engaged in any changes on the peninsula.

The complementary argument to *chajusong* is that all the major powers, their rhetoric to the contrary notwithstanding, wish to prevent Korean unification lest it upset the regional balance of power. Koreans are so indoctrinated in this view that it has become an unquestioned fact, and any evidence to the contrary is dismissed or simply ignored. This is a terribly overstated myth. The major powers, in particular the United States and Japan, do not oppose unification per se. They simply prefer the known status quo to an unknown and potentially destabilizing future. The primary objective of each major power on the peninsula with regard to its own security is to maintain the strange form of stability that has emerged since 1953 based on deterrence and stalemate. A suboptimal outcome, in the minds of all concerned with the peninsula, is still preferable to a change in the status quo that may lead in unpredictable and unpleasant directions.

Nevertheless, were the two Koreas to begin a process of unification tomorrow, it would be wholly within the interests of the major powers to support it without prevarication. This is so because any actions to the contrary would risk making an enemy of the newly united and more powerful Korea.

¹⁶ For discussions of these scenarios, see Young Whan Kihl, ed., *Korea and the World* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994); and Aidan Foster-Carter, *Korea's Coming Reunification: Economist Intelligence Unit Special Report* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1992).

¹⁷ For the classic statement of these points, see James W. Morley, "The Dynamics of the Korean Connection," in *The U.S.-South Korean Alliance*, ed. Gerald Curtis and Sung-joo Han (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1983).

Thus, while the impetus for changing the status quo is not likely to come from the major powers, Koreans can be assured that once they start the process themselves the external powers would be obliged to support it, not out of affinity, goodwill, or loyalty (although these factors may be present), but because it is in their respective interests to do so.

The second tenet of unification—that it is inevitable because division is aberrant—has a ritualistic quality about it that obscures the real ambivalence with which many Koreans themselves regard unification. It has always been the holy grail, but enthusiasm for it has fluctuated wildly over the past decade. At the end of the Cold War the common view was that unification (whether through a hard or soft landing) was only a matter of time, given the collapse of the Soviet Union and North Korea's economic difficulties. The Kim Young Sam administration in South Korea in the early 1990s claimed that absorption of the North was just around the corner. However, both the confidence and enthusiasm that typified South Korean attitudes waned dramatically thereafter. First, the North Korean regime defied all the experts just by surviving, thereby ruling out the "unification by default" scenario.¹⁸ Secondly, a better understanding of Germany's reunification deflated Korean expectations in two ways. The comparative indicators did not bode well for Korea, since the economic gap between East and West Germany was relatively smaller than that between the two Koreas, and the capacity of the West German economy to absorb its counterpart also surpassed South Korea's. Moreover, what South Koreans saw initially as ill-advised mistakes by the Germans on integration policy, especially the one-to-one currency union, were soon to be seen as unavoidable given the need to accommodate a newly enfranchised East German electorate—a problem that the government of a united Korea would also face. Finally, while government-supported research institutes in South Korea initially judged the costs of unification to be manageable, more objective independent studies subsequently put the costs as high as \$1 trillion, far exceeding even the German example.¹⁹ Finally, the

¹⁸ For representative arguments in this debate, see Byung-joon Ahn, "The Man Who Would Be Kim," *Foreign Affairs*, Nov./Dec. 1994, pp. 94–108; Nicholas Eberstadt, "Hastening Korean Unification," *Foreign Affairs*, Mar./Apr. 1997, pp. 77–92; and Marcus Noland, "Why North Korea Will Muddle Through," *Foreign Affairs*, July/Aug. 1997, pp. 105–18.

¹⁹ The "cost" of unification is generally defined as the amount of investment and capital necessary to bring DPRK production levels to within 40 percent of the ROK's over ten years. For initial estimates and evaluations, see Foster-Carter, *Korea's Coming Unification*. For subsequent reassessments that put the cost much higher, see Marcus Noland, Sherman Robinson, and Li-Gang Liu, "The Costs and Benefits of Korean Unification," *Asian Survey*, Aug. 1998, pp. 801–14; Marcus Noland, *Avoiding the Apocalypse: The Future of the Two Koreas* (Washington, D.C.: International Institute for Economics, 2000); and Goldman Sachs calculations reported in Jae-hoon Lee, "Required Social Overhead Capital for NK to Exceed \$6 Billion" (in Korean), *JoongAng Ilbo*, June 14, 2000. The revised studies took into account the additional burden of dealing with a socialist economy, as well as other previously unforeseen costs. In most cases, the infrastructure and capital base that exist cannot be built upon, but must actually be torn down and rebuilt. Moreover, the availability of foreign investment and capital to finance these costs will probably not meet South Korean expectations because, at least initially, unification will be met with more unfavorable international risk ratings.

liquidity crisis that hit South Korea in 1997–98 brought into stark and sobering relief the high costs of such an exercise and deflated any remaining buoyant expectations about unification.

The new ambivalence toward unification is manifest in several ways. Popular attitudes have changed markedly, and pragmatic considerations have intruded on what was formerly a normative discourse on unification. In part this is linked to generational change as those who remember a unified Korea (albeit as part of the Japanese empire) die off. It is also linked to the North's famine-like conditions, which only magnify further the anticipated costs of union. The result is that unification is no longer an article of faith, and the discourse has shifted instead to the added tax burden it would engender and the pressures it would place on an already weak social safety net. Hence, while it is still part of one's Korean identity to yearn for unification, a cautious "NIMT" (not in my time) consensus has emerged. As one observer noted, "[Unification] is a goal recited with an understood wink. While virtually everyone in South Korea vows allegiance to it, few people actually want it to happen very soon, if at all."²⁰

This NIMT consensus is also apparent in current South Korean policy. A number of traits distinguish Seoul's sunshine policy toward North Korea, including the persistence and consistency of the policy in spite of DPRK provocations as well as the open-ended nature of engagement (encouraging all countries to engage with North Korea).²¹ But what is most important in the context of this discussion is that it is the first northern policy in South Korean history that does not explicitly enunciate the goal of unification. Indeed, it takes it off the agenda. Thus, the North-South summit resounded with talk about national reconciliation and unification, but couched in terms implying that it was still a long way off. In fact, the two unification formulas referred to in the joint declaration (the DPRK Confederal Republic of Koryo and ROK Commonwealth) are premised less on integration than on self-preservation, with "one nation, two systems" as the common point of reference.²²

These changing attitudes affect how Americans should be thinking about future solutions to the Korean problem. Generally, solutions are situated along two dimensions: a continuation of the status quo, or a victory for one side or the other. However, the shift in Korean attitudes on unification means that the United States needs to think about permanent solutions on the peninsula that are not zero-sum. Advancing from an armistice to a peace treaty is certainly a prerequisite, but moving beyond that to formulas that

**In the South,
unification is
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article of faith.**

²⁰ Doug Struck, "In the South, One Korea is Distant Goal," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2000.

²¹ See Hong Soon-young, "Thawing Korea's Cold War," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999, pp. 8–12.

²² For an analysis of these two plans, see B. C. Koh, "A Comparison of Unification Policies," in *Korea and the World*. For the four-point declaration, see "The South-North Declaration," *Korea Update*, June 25, 2000.

might include Korean coexistence and U.S. withdrawal, or Korean coexistence and a U.S. role as peacekeeper, would be a far more delicate task. There are other possibilities as well, but the point is that as soon as one begins to take unification seriously, the options for the U.S. military presence move far beyond those bequeathed by the fifty-year stalemate.

Is the U.S.-ROK Alliance Still Relevant?

Across a range of criteria that determine the functional success of a military alliance, the U.S.-ROK alliance has done well.²³ It has enabled the stationing of 37,000 U.S. troops directly at the point of conflict on the peninsula, simultaneously providing the South with unequivocal proof of the U.S. defense commitment and deterring the North with its tripwire presence. The two militaries operate smoothly under a joint, unitary command (the Combined Forces Command, or CFC) with a common doctrine and clear division of combat roles practiced through frequent and extensive joint training. Host-country support for the alliance has been and continues to be strong. Arguably, U.S.-ROK military coordination is far better than the U.S.-Australia or U.S.-Saudi Arabia alliances, and matched only by NATO and the U.S.-Japan alliance.²⁴ However, the unexpected congeniality of the North-South summit led to broad speculation about the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance. If the likelihood of conflict on the peninsula has been effaced by this breakthrough, as some suggest, then what is the purpose of the alliance? Has South Korean tolerance for the burdensome aspects of the alliance, especially its bases and training ranges, waned in proportion to the euphoria of the summit? Has the summit created a divergence of interests on the peninsula and an incentive for South Koreans to “decouple” peace on the peninsula from other issues of concern to the United States and Japan? In short, has the alliance become a Cold War anachronism?

These are hard questions that the allies must answer with regard to the future, but the emphasis here is on “future.” Excited observers drew an immediate causal link between the successful summit and the obsolescence of the alliance, and it appeals to Korean romanticism to think that this bold move by their leaders will end the foreign presence in their country. But the fact of the matter is that the alliance is here to stay so long as the threat remains, and perhaps even beyond. The majority of South Korean security

²³ Alliances serve the purpose of providing for one's security in a more efficient and less costly manner than would be possible independently. In this vein, an alliance's success is measured by the extent to which it serves as a facilitator of power accretion and projection, operates as a unified command, enables common tactics and doctrine through joint training, promotes a division of security roles, facilitates cooperation in production and development of military equipment, and elicits political support among domestic constituencies. See Ashton Carter and William Perry, *Preventive Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

²⁴ The U.S.-ROK alliance surpasses the U.S.-Japan alliance insofar as it possesses a unitary command, and surpasses NATO in terms of a clear division of labor and cooperation in the production of some military equipment.

thinkers, including Kim Dae-jung himself, are on record calling for a security relationship with the United States even *after* unification.²⁵ And until unification, they understand that summit courtesies cannot stop ballistic missiles or nuclear posturing, preclude heightened tension along the Demilitarized Zone, or cancel out the legitimate security concerns of Washington and Tokyo. In short, while complaints about the intrusive aspects of U.S. bases and training heat up every time kind words are exchanged between North and South Korea, the clear-headed among Seoul's policymakers will not trade away the Eighth Army in return for handshakes in Pyongyang.

Secondly, the argument that the end of the Soviet threat and the Korean détente have highlighted troubling disparities in U.S. and ROK security interests on the peninsula is not a particularly novel one. American and South Korean interests are indeed different, but this has always been so. Historically, ROK expectations regarding the credibility of its American ally's commitments have always been local in terms of peninsular security and the zero-sum competition with the North. On the other hand, the United States has always viewed the Korea issue through the prism of its larger regional or global strategies. Differences emerged occasionally, but were managed well because the American Cold War strategy linked events in the periphery with U.S.-Soviet competition at the core, thereby causing the regional and local views to converge.²⁶

To be sure, change has occurred, most notably with regard to the increasing compartmentalization of security and political issues on the peninsula. Family reunions, economic aid, and cultural and sports exchanges are discussed largely within the context of North-South dialogue (as confirmed by the June summit). Concerns about North Korean nuclear proliferation are addressed in the context of the 1994 Agreed Framework and its institutional offspring, the Korea Energy Development Organization, which is led by the United States, South Korea, and Japan. The armistice and peace treaty fall under the purview of the Four Party talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, and China. And North Korea's ballistic missile program and terrorism status are negotiated through bilateral U.S.-DPRK channels. These discrete and institutionalized channels for dealing with various aspects of security have clear benefits in the sense that improvements in any one of them may provide momentum for others.

For example, the North-South summit's positive outcome arguably spilled over to the U.S. decision to lift some economic sanctions against the

²⁵ "Kim Dae-jung Calls for Post-Reunification U.S. Presence," *Seoul Yonhap*, Dec. 30, 1997.

²⁶ Such differences often surfaced when the United States refused to punish DPRK provocations in accordance with ROK expectations. In the cases of the Blue House Raid by North Korean commandos and the seizure of the U.S.S. *Pueblo* (January 1968), the ROK demanded harsh retaliation. The U.S. response was decidedly more muted, however, because of the desire to avoid actions that might open a second front in Asia. For details, see Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), chap. 3.

DPRK and Pyongyang's reaffirmation of its moratorium on missile tests. The disadvantage of such compartmentalization, some critics argue, is that it promotes the decoupling of issues within the alliance. For example, improvements in North-South relations provide Seoul with the luxury of decoupling itself from Washington's and Tokyo's concerns regarding DPRK ballistic missiles and WMD. However, such an argument fails on three counts. First, there are clear overlaps in the memberships of these institutions, making it hard to freeze out foreign powers, especially China and the United States. Secondly, decoupling only makes sense if there is no value placed on the policy coordination among the United States, Japan, and South Korea institutionalized in the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group. It is just as inadvisable for Seoul to spurn an interest in Tokyo's worries about DPRK missiles as it would be for Tokyo to obstruct Seoul's efforts to consummate family reunions with the North. Finally, South Korean decoupling would be destructive to the entire engagement process in that it would undercut any hope of DPRK access to economic aid provided by international financial institutions in which Japan and the United States are the leading players. In sum, divergent interests between the United States and ROK are neither a new phenomenon nor symptomatic of an end to the alliance. Resiliency rests, as it always has, on the ability to manage the differences that exist.

Alliance Management and "Upkeep"

Perhaps the biggest change for the alliance is the increased attention that must be paid to its "upkeep." To many observers, this became apparent at the time of the North-South summit, when détente coincided with increasing antipathy among the South Korean public toward the more intrusive elements of the American military presence.²⁷ However, the roots of this dynamic lay in the South Korean national legislative elections in spring 2000, in which issues of labor and the environment resonated with voters. Such concerns traditionally had little traction in Korean politics, but with the end of the Cold War, democratic consolidation, and the emergence of a younger generation, the political spectrum has broadened sufficiently to encompass civil-military issues.²⁸

As a consequence for the alliance, South Korean grievances about the status-of-forces agreement, basing and land use, live-fire exercises, host-nation support, and the CFC structures will attract increasing attention from local politicians and voters. A full discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, but the United States generally enjoys more favorable

²⁷ For example, protests over U.S. military use of Koon-ni for training exercises coincided with both the summit and the 50th anniversary of the Korean War.

²⁸ This phenomenon was popularly known as the *sam-p'al-yook* (3-8-6) generation's coming of age in politics (in their thirties, educated in the eighties, born in the sixties).

terms on these elements of the alliance than it does in the case of NATO and Japan.²⁹ For example, the CFC has been a delicate sovereignty issue for the two governments. Operational command was in the hands of a U.S. general until December 1995, when the positions of peacetime control commander and chief of the military armistice commission were transferred to South Korean officers. There are increasing calls by South Koreans for wartime operational control as well, but this faces two obstacles: the lack of adequate intelligence capabilities (which Seoul also wants the United States to provide) and American reluctance to concede wartime operational control in any theater where U.S. forces are engaged. Most likely, an alternative arrangement would have to resemble the NATO-type combined control system in wartime or the U.S.-Japan system of independent control, but with specified guidelines about roles and expectations. With regard to basing, the United States, with 36,272 troops, currently occupies a small fraction of total South Korean land, but U.S. installations account for 40 percent of the land in metropolitan Seoul.³⁰ One hears increasing calls for changes in the percentage, location, and terms of land use for American bases.³¹

Major changes to the alliance along any of these dimensions would have to wait for a formal peace settlement on the peninsula. In the interim, pressures emanate from within the alliance to manage these issues so as to minimize the negative externalities of the U.S. base presence. But upkeep issues would have surfaced on the U.S.-ROK agenda regardless of the recent summit because they are a function of South Korea's democratization and the rise of a politically active civil society. Moreover, contrary to popular perception, the object of these protests is not necessarily to end the alliance or force an early withdrawal of U.S. forces, but to seek compensation and a means of redressing grievances.³² Finally, the alliance's focus on upkeep issues is actually a good omen, because it represents a natural evolution toward a more equitable relationship. This was the path taken by the United States and Japan in the face of problems in Okinawa, and the resulting adjustments have made their alliance stronger.

²⁹ See Kim Chun-pom, "Inevitable Changes in ROK-US Security Relations" (in Korean), *WJV*, Aug. 7, 1998; and Ministry of National Defense, *White Paper, 1997-8* (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 1998).

³⁰ There are 98 U.S. bases on the peninsula, of which 82 are operated by the army, 14 by the air force, and two by the navy.

³¹ The precedent for this was set in June 1990 when the two governments agreed to the relocation of Yongsan out of central Seoul to Osan and Pyongtaek. After completion of an initial phase in March 1991, the plan was postponed indefinitely by the North Korean nuclear crisis. Since then, disputes have arisen over the costs of relocation, which were originally to be borne by the ROK government and were estimated in 1990 at over 2 trillion won (approximately \$2.9 billion at the time). Adjustments in the terms of land usage are also likely.

³² For example, in the South Korean protests over U.S. bombing and strafing practices at Koon-ni in the summer of 2000, the headlines emphasized calls to end the U.S. military presence. In actuality, the inhabitants of the area were seeking compensation and a voice; calls for withdrawal were made by fringe groups whom the inhabitants did not know. See Jim Lea, "Riot Police Clash with Protesters at Koon-ni," and "Protesters briefly halt training at Koon-ni Range," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 22, 2000.

Given the change that appears to be sweeping across the Korean peninsula, an essay stressing continuities may appear to “rain on Korea’s parade.” The faces of ordinary Koreans as they viewed the live telecast of the summit in subway stations, coffee houses, and offices conveyed deep emotion, and one can only hope that the North-South dialogue will not go the route of past initiatives, dying after the initial fanfare and euphoria subside. But the need for perspective is for that reason all the more urgent. The summit has opened a first, narrow window on North Korean intentions. This is important, but also inconclusive, for even though we may have reached the threshold of change, the truly hard work is yet to be done. North Korean intentions could be made clearer by progress on the commitments made in the summit with regard to family reunions, a return visit by the Dear Leader, and the creation of high-level institutions for dialogue. Moreover, credible communication must be complemented by changes in the deployment of conventional forces, the DPRK’s missile and WMD programs, and the status of U.S. forces on the peninsula. Only when those things have been achieved will the holy grail be in sight: peace on the Korean peninsula, the most important event in East Asia since 1953.



Taiwan's 2000 Presidential Election

by James A. Robinson and Deborah A. Brown

On March 23, 1996, Taiwan held the first direct presidential election in five thousand years of Chinese history and four hundred years of Taiwanese history.¹ On March 18, 2000, the same Taiwan electorate, reinforced by about a million newly eligible young voters, held another historic vote. This second election would provide the highest-level voluntary exchange of political power ever experienced in Chinese or Taiwanese society. One might expect the follow-up election to generate less excitement than the first as faces become familiar, turnout declines, high hopes diminish, and practical matters prevail.² But Taiwan's second election was anything but routine: turnout seemed likely to remain above 70 percent, some people's hopes for change were rising, and such major themes as cross-strait relations, government efficiency, and "money politics" dominated public opinion polls and campaign speeches. To be sure, these issues were reportedly more important because of "valence" or "style" than the specific positions taken, but all major candidates produced position papers addressed to virtually every conceivable interest group.³

In the last seven days of the campaign, defections from one camp to

¹ An early version of this paper was presented to the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Inter-University Study Group on the United States and Asia on Mar. 29, 2000. A longer version of this article, titled "Taiwan's 2000 Presidential Election: Appraising Steps in Democratization," appeared on Apr. 19, 2000, on China Online (<http://www.chinaonline.com/commentary-analysis/intrelations/newsarchive.asp?ctgy+intrelations>).

² Michael Bratton, "Second Elections in Africa," *Journal of Democracy*, July 1998, pp. 51–66.

³ Valence or style issues are those on which candidates (and parties) do not differ except in the extent to which they accentuate one theme rather than another. Cross-strait relations, for example, constitute a theme on which candidates and parties share similar views, but to which they devote varying degrees of attention. Few voters desire either independence or unification in the near term, and the major parties and candidates adhere to the common stance in favor of the status quo. For the ranking of these themes in the public opinion surveys of 2000, we rely especially on reports of the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, the results of which were presented to us in an interview with the center's director, Dr. Hung Yung-tai, and colleagues on Mar. 14, 2000.

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another, surprising endorsements by prominent figures, and a record single-day stock market decline added unpredictability to a contest in which public preferences appeared to be divided more or less equally among three candidates. Even a cold rain in usually balmy Kaohsiung did not deter at least 350,000 people from joining the largest political rally ever seen in Taiwan, for Chen Shui-bian, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate. Not far away, more than 100,000 Kuomintang (KMT) supporters turned out on behalf of their party's nominee, Vice President Lien Chan. Streets and thoroughfares were festooned with banners and posters. Enormous billboards of smiling, informally attired public servants dominated Taipei in the north and Kaohsiung in the south, while smaller versions adorned apartments and office buildings in cities and towns in between. Such campaign memorabilia as jackets, baseball caps, mugs, pennants, pens, and candidates' biographies were given away at rallies and storefronts or exchanged for small contributions from admiring voters. As is the case in many other electoral democracies, party loyalties were of less importance to voters than formerly. Indeed, one strong candidate, Soong Chu-yu (James Soong), an insurgent from the KMT, ran as an independent, pledging to form a nonpartisan government if elected. Soong might have been a stronger candidate but for allegations that he amassed considerable personal wealth from funds accumulated during his campaign for election as governor of Taiwan Province, a position that was abolished at the end of his term.

Publication of public opinion polls ceased on March 8, ten days before voting, in accordance with Article 47 of the Presidential and Vice Presidential Election and Recall Law. But the last polls published indicated a slow, steady decline in Soong's popularity and a gradual closing of the gap between Chen and Lien.⁴ The flurry of endorsements collected by the latter two during the final week from prominent businessmen, former government officials, and the esteemed president of Academia Sinica further encouraged the view that the race had come down to a choice between the nominees of the two major parties. The issues that appeared to divide them included their only subtly differentiated platforms regarding the People's Republic of China (PRC). A fundamental question concerned the extent to which the general public at last thought it safe to discharge from office a party that for some fifty years had governed the gradual passage from authoritarianism to democracy, postponed resolving territorial disputes with the PRC, and accumulated a host of criticisms and grievances.

On election day, 12,786,671 of 15,462,625 eligible voters turned out—a record 82.69 percent. With a plurality of 39.3 percent, the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won the presidency of the Republic of China on Taiwan for a four-year term beginning May 20. The independent James Soong won 36.8

⁴ "Opinion Polls Show No Clear Leader," *China Times*, Mar. 7, 2000, translated and posted at Taiwan Headlines (<http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw>).

percent, and the KMT's Lien Chan received 23.1 percent. The three-way electoral division indicated no clear direction for the major parties (or any party or movement that might be sought or formed by Soong). In a race in which loyalty to party and platform became less significant, the attractiveness of candidates as individuals figured prominently in the vote. Considering the convergence of the candidates' positions, Chen's victory signaled voters' willingness to give an opposition candidate the first opportunity ever to form an alternative government to the KMT. Chen lacked an unambiguous mandate, but his nearly 40 percent share of the total vote was larger than expected and sufficient to silence doubts about his legitimacy. Soong positioned himself to be the chief opposition figure to Chen, while Lien headed for party work rather than government office for the first time in years.

The unfamiliar and unstable party alignment was matched by uncertain prospects for cross-strait relations. In pre-election propaganda, PRC leaders denounced Chen, but indiscriminately condemned all candidates for their pro-Taiwan positions. None of the candidates proposed to provoke China with a stance favoring independence, and all welcomed talks with leaders in Beijing. China's officials would interpret the election outcome for themselves, but there was considerable concern about how, when, and in what terms they would do so. Thus, March 18, 2000, would be remembered as the day the people of Taiwan "stood up," voted into office the candidate most opposed by Beijing, and began to await the responses of leaders of the People's Republic and the United States to their exercise of suffrage, an institution unfamiliar in the former and respected as the foundation of a free society in the latter.⁵

What Does the Outcome Tell Us?

Foreign scholars began observing Taiwan elections in earnest in 1986, paying special attention to the consequences for democratic development. Throughout the last decade and a half, those of us who followed Taiwan regularly shifted the grounds for appraising its democratic evolution, raising the bar of evaluation, so to speak.⁶ In the late 1980s, the pertinent question

⁵ That we and others independently remarked that the people of Taiwan, or a decisive plurality of them, "stood up" was an unsubtle reminder of Mao Zedong's similar reference to Chinese people in the days leading up to and during the proclamation of the PRC, late September and October 1, 1949. See Philip Short, *Mao: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), p. 419. Others who invoked this phrase included *Taipei Times*, Mar. 19, 2000, lead editorial (<http://www.taipeitimes.com/news/>), and *The Economist*, Mar. 25, 2000, p. 23.

⁶ See, for example, James A. Robinson, "Local Elections in Taiwan, 1993–94," *Political Chronicle*, Winter/Spring 1994–95, pp. 1–9; "Provincial, Metropolitan, and Recall Elections in Taiwan, 1994," *ibid.*, Spring/Summer 1996, pp. 27–34; "Taiwan's 1995 Legislative Yuan Elections," *American Asian Review*, Fall 1996, pp. 107–130; "Taiwan's 1996 National Assembly and Presidential Elections," *ibid.*, Spring 1998, pp. 1–34; Eric P. Moon and James A. Robinson, "Taiwan's 1997 Local Elections," *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Apr. 1998, pp. 131–46; Deborah A. Brown, Eric P. Moon, and James A. Robinson, "Taiwan's 1998 Local Elections," *Asian Survey*, June

was, is electoral democracy possible in Taiwan? By the early 1990s the question became, is electoral democracy probable? And in 1996, on the occasion of the first direct presidential election in Taiwanese and Chinese history, we asked, has democracy arrived? Is the transition from authoritarian to democratic politics complete?

No sooner had Lee Teng-hui taken the oath as the first popularly elected leader than we observers again raised the criteria of democratic performance, turning our attention from “democratic transition” to “democratic consolidation.” To what extent, the question became, is Taiwan’s democracy durable? Two Taiwanese scholars recognized several elements requiring change if Taiwan’s democratic process were to continue: civilian control of the military, a judiciary independent of partisan intrusions, and more competition among major political parties.⁷ Other observers noted other grounds for concern, including signs of “voter fatigue,” that is, declining participation in frequent elections—except where declines were offset by vote buying, a practice that appeared to increase in some local elections.⁸ Still other democracy watchers warned of disjunctions between aspirations and achievements, notably, a bias in electronic media, high costs of election campaigns leading to corruption, and Chinese and American constraints on Taiwan’s capacity to decide its constitutional future for itself.

These criticisms of the state of Taiwan’s consolidation were and are formidable, but compared to new democracies in Africa or Latin America, for example, they seemed advanced, technical, even theoretical. Elsewhere, doubts about the extent to which democratic practices have become accepted turn on more weighty questions: Will a second election be held? Will some major groups or parties boycott it? Are there influential, visible numbers of people disloyal to the new practices and institutions? However substantial Taiwan’s problems, they never cast doubt on the fundamental proposition that almost all elements of the population viewed the present state of democracy as a decisive improvement over previous forms of government. Meanwhile, democratic practices had been strengthened or reinforced between presidential elections. The Legislative Yuan adopted reforms designed to bring the military under tighter civilian control; the Judicial Yuan took steps, however slow and incomplete, toward increasing the independence of judges and prosecutors; cable television challenged the ruling party’s and government’s monopoly on effective electronic media; the ruling party’s

1998, pp. 569–84; Eric P. Moon, “Taiwan’s 1998 Township Council and Neighbourhood Chief Elections,” *China Perspectives*, Sept./Oct. 1998, pp. 22–29; and Deborah A. Brown, Eric P. Moon, and James A. Robinson, “Taiwan’s 1998 Legislative and Metropolitan Elections,” *ibid.*, Jan./Feb. 1999, pp. 29–37.

⁷ Hung-mao Tien and Tun-jen Cheng, “Crafting Democratic Institutions in Taiwan,” *The China Journal*, Jan. 1997, pp. 1–30.

⁸ Yun-han Chu and Larry Diamond, “Taiwan’s 1998 Elections: Implications for Democratic Consolidation,” *Asian Survey*, Sept./Oct. 1999, pp. 808–22.

presidential candidate proposed putting the party's large and unusual assets into trust; and the presidential contest became a close three-way race.

Taiwan's presidential election law provides thirty days for campaigning among candidates, but, like several other features of the island's electoral rules, it is ignored. One of the major parties nominated its candidate the previous May, another in August. All other candidates qualified by filing signed petitions in mid-autumn. During the long period preceding official electioneering, presidential candidates dominated the front pages of the local press. And the electronic media, which probably became more prominent than printed sources, gave the campaign similar high-profile attention. On the basis of these many months of media coverage, one major wire service filed a story on the first day of the official campaign period summarizing the content of the contest to date with words such as "mudslinging," "vitriol," "scandals," and "lawsuits."⁹ This characterization of negative campaigning was picked up by the *Taipei Times* in Taiwan and the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong.

It is unnecessary to review the evidence to believe the characterization to be accurate. Taiwan had been an electoral democracy for a decade, with major elections for a variety of offices since the lifting of martial law in 1987. In previous campaigns, candidates routinely depicted rivals in alarming fashion and warned of dire consequences if their opponents were elected. In addition to fear mongering, typical campaign rhetoric included criticisms of tempers, finances, and infidelities. In the euphoria of the historic first direct presidential election of 1996, it was easy to overlook the rumors, innuendoes, exaggerations, and warnings uttered by some candidates and many supporters. Nevertheless, foreign observers who flocked to Taiwan in record numbers that year could not help but note the similarities with the campaign practices of Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, to campaign effectively is to campaign negatively, as history testifies—ever since the first national election in the oldest democracy, the United States. Starting with the election of delegates to the state ratifying conventions to consider adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1788 and 1789, fear mongering, exaggeration, imprecations of war and revolution, and personal attacks have marked virtually every electoral contest.¹⁰

The tactics used by Lien Chan, Chen Shui-bian, and James Soong were well within the norms of democratic politics because, among other reasons, voters in democratic societies generally make their decisions in similar fashion.¹¹ People with strong opinions about parties and candidates

⁹ "Scandals, Lawsuits and Close Polls for Taiwan Presidential Election," Agence France-Presse (<http://taiwan.security.org/AFP/AFP-021800-Campaign.htm>).

¹⁰ William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Warren E. Miller and J. Merrill Shanks, *The New American Voter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University

tend to make up their minds early in a campaign. Once they are committed, the candidates have little need to appeal for their votes, aside from periodic reinforcement of decisions already made. The bulk of campaign speeches, rallies, parades, and advertisements are directed at the undecided voters, and research on voting has documented that, at least until recently, many of the undecided were uninterested, uninformed, and uninvolved. Their votes can be crucial, but these undecided potential voters must be challenged and persuaded to vote. If information alone will not motivate them, then they must be targeted with appeals of other kinds, which almost invariably include cries of alarm, exaggeration of one's own accomplishments, and distortion of opponents' weaknesses. Thus, if postelection analysis proves that Taiwan's 2000 presidential election was more negative than that of 1996, one ought not be surprised. In 1996 Lee Teng-hui won 54 percent of the vote compared to his nearest competitor's 21 percent. But in 2000 the outcome was in doubt even in the final week, making negative campaigning both rational and effective. Yet, negative campaigning is not necessarily a permanent feature of Taiwan's political landscape. Scholars and scientists of political behavior observe the emergence of a set of voters who delay their decisions not because they are uncaring or unconcerned, but because they are thoughtful and inquiring. Having lost or never had attachments to political parties, labor unions, and other traditional institutions, they do not look to others to instruct them so much as they examine candidates and how they relate to issues that vitally concern them. Such "postmodern" voters appear in many different democracies, and there is reason to believe that their numbers may be increasing in Taiwan.¹² To the extent that voters of this type become more significant, concerns about negative campaigning may abate somewhat.

The Effect of Money

When Taiwan voters went to the polls for their second direct presidential election, their new democracy was, judging by many standards, consolidated.¹³ Voters and politicians alike accepted it as "the only game in town" and almost universally acknowledged that they were better off with a noisy democracy than with their former authoritarian state. Even before the ballots were cast, however, democracy watchers at home and abroad began reappraising Taiwan's electoral process and once again raising the criteria of evaluation of the island's progress in democratization. In the view of many

Press, 1996).

¹² Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹³ We have depended more or less explicitly for standards of appraisal on Robert A. Dahl's conceptions of criteria of democracy and of institutions and practices that meet those criteria. See Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* and *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989 and 1998, respectively).

observers, at least four related problems confronted the Taiwan electorate and their leaders. What these problems have in common is money, and specifically the use of money in party and electoral affairs in ways that subvert the common interests of the people at large for the private interests of a few. "Black and gold" politics, as it is called, challenges public interests through ways both peculiar to Taiwan and similar to other new democracies.¹⁴

The first anomaly of Taiwan's affairs is the KMT's extraordinary wealth based on its ownership of a vast collection of income-generating enterprises. The second is the unusual "single nontransferable vote" method of electing the Legislative Yuan and many city and county councils. The outcomes of this electoral method are often skewed by influence peddling and vote buying. Both of these features of Taiwan's political culture date from experiences before and during the Japanese occupation of the island in the first half of the twentieth century. The third problem, the KMT's dominance of electronic media, is of more recent origin. The fourth consists of the hundreds or thousands of village fiefdoms dominated by the KMT, a decades-long condition that combines with the other circumstances to create an unlevel field of play among political parties and independent candidates.

Among political parties worldwide, the KMT is almost unique in the extent of its wealth, which was acquired through the accumulation of assets of many sorts: banks, construction, investment services, chemicals, publishing, entertainment, and television. Other countries have parties that own business enterprises, but none has holdings, or influence from holdings, comparable to those of the KMT. The income from KMT assets was often less than optimal because

Among political parties worldwide, the KMT's wealth is almost unique.

of inefficient management, but the party has displayed innovative talents, such as investing in the science-based Hsinchu Research Park. It also assumed pension-fund obligations for party cadres who moved back and forth between party and government employment. Six years ago, 80 percent of the party's income was dedicated to personnel, including the salaries of current party employees and retirement benefits of former ones. In the latter 1990s, thanks to new managers with new strategies including divestment and reinvestment, assets grew at a rate faster than personnel obligations. By 2000, only 50 percent of KMT income was used for salaries and benefits, which left an even larger pie to be divided among candidates in Taiwan's many elections. In a single electoral cycle, more than 13,000 local, regional, and national offices are up for grabs. While candidates have invariably com-

¹⁴ See James A. Robinson and Deborah A. Brown, "Taiwan's 'Black Gold Politics,'" *Asian Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 17–18, 2000. "Black" refers to the KMT's association with mobsters; "gold" refers to the perceived favoritism of the government toward KMT-linked businesses. See Julian Baum with Dan Biers, "When a Giant Falls," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Apr. 16, 2000, p. 19.

plained that they receive too little assistance from the party, the KMT nevertheless taps a vault of funds to support favored nominees.

The precise value of all KMT assets is veiled, and estimates vary from U.S.\$2.2 billion to \$20 billion. The annual income from these assets also remains secret and perhaps unknowable despite managerial improvements. Estimates are that 1999 earnings exceeded \$250 million and may have reached as high as \$400 million. Whatever their exact amounts, the KMT's resources are unusual in form, unprecedented in size, and undemocratic in effect.¹⁵ (Ironically, in the early days of democratization, the party could use its resources to encourage risk-averse cadres to stand for elective office. They were assured that if they lost they would be eligible for a post in a party-owned enterprise.) More than their novelty or volume, it is the resources' lingering undemocratic consequences that disturbs democracy watchers. Free and fair elections are typically thought of as contests conducted with administrative efficiency, transparency, and integrity, free of ballot stuffing or intimidation. In electorates with a long-standing dominant party, however, the concept of "fairness" must take into account the disparity of resources among major parties and their nominees for office at all levels.

Alternatives for regulating or disposing of party enterprises circulated for years among Taipei's policy analysts, especially during presidential campaigns. The KMT's Lien would put the assets into blind trusts, thereby preventing party officials in government posts from making decisions that would affect party fortunes or from using the assets to intervene in and manipulate the stock market. The DPP's Chen would reclaim those assets that might have been obtained illegally, as through confiscation or embezzlement, and use the rest to create a "super endowment" to support the nation's pension, unemployment-compensation, and health-insurance programs. Still another alternative would establish a foundation to pay out the remainder of the KMT's pension obligations and then nationalize all assets into a perpetual fund to finance Taiwan's election campaigns.

Three other features of the KMT's historic domination of elections blight further progress in democracy. One of these is the archaic electoral system for filling seats in the Legislative Yuan and in city and county councils. When the Republic of China Constitution of 1947, which is still in force today on Taiwan, was adopted, the KMT borrowed the Japanese format of electing several diet members from a relatively small number of constituencies. Voters choose one candidate among many for several seats representing the same

¹⁵ The best introduction to this topic may be found in several reports by Julian Baum: "The Money Machine," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Aug. 11, 1994, pp. 62–67; "Political Minefield," *ibid.*, Feb. 3, 2000, pp. 22–24; with Dan Biers, "The New-Look KMT Inc.," *ibid.*, Mar. 9, 2000, pp. 42–45. Also note Allen T. Cherry, "The Curse of 'Black Gold,'" *Asiaweek*, Mar. 17, 2000, pp. 24–25. See also (in Chinese) Shih-Meng S. Chen et al., *Disintegrating KMT-State Capitalism: A Closer Look at Privatizing Taiwan's State and Party-Owned Enterprises* (Taipei: Taipei Society, 1991); and Liang Yung-huang and Tien Hsi-ru, *Liquidating the Kuomintang* (Taipei: Wealth Publishing, 2000).

district. This multimember, single-vote system, which was used in city council elections on Taiwan even before the 1947 constitution was adopted, has had the effect of pitting nominees of the same party against each other and requiring them to raise large sums for their campaigns. Those who succeed in winning office are then tempted to recover their investment by awarding contracts in exchange for kickbacks. In the 1990s Japan abolished this electoral method in favor of conventional single-member districts combined with proportional representation of at-large candidates.¹⁶ The reform did not reduce corruption significantly, but that was because it was taken in isolation rather than as part of a package of innovations, each part of which could have added to the effectiveness of the other. That is why Taiwan's leaders have been advised to undertake electoral reform and party finance reform simultaneously.

For the same reason and with the same strategy, members of Taiwan's elite have sought to find a way to break the KMT's exclusive control of television. When the new medium became popular twenty-five years ago during the martial law period, it was natural for the party and government to exclude opponents and make television a tool of propaganda. Nor was this practice repudiated when the democratic era began in the late 1980s, although the rise of cable and alternative channels did attenuate somewhat the KMT's media monopoly. Bias remained evident throughout the 2000 campaign. Stations owned by the KMT and government refused to sell advertising time to opposition candidates even as the KMT itself purchased considerable air time on a channel created by DPP partisans. Following the election, journalists from KMT-controlled stations openly criticized the directions given them by their employers, and a survey among a sample of the public reported perceptions of unfairness in news coverage.¹⁷

The effect of money in Taiwan's politics trickles down to the election of village or neighborhood chiefs and the councilors of small towns. The origins of these positions lie in informal, preindustrial forms of village self-government, not dissimilar to those still found in cosmopolitan Hong Kong and mainland China. In Taiwan's case, circumstances preserved the local offices, but left officials with minimal responsibilities. When the KMT fled to Taiwan in the late 1940s, its leaders realized the advantages of coopting local officials, and they were so successful that the KMT typically dominates local elections to this day. After the 1940s, competition for these posts increased as local factions demanded that the KMT placate them. In many locales, the KMT simply alternated between factions, endorsing the "black" faction's

¹⁶ Otake Hider, ed., *How Electoral Reforms Boomeranged: Continuity in Japanese Campaigning Style* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998).

¹⁷ "KMT Candidate Gets Most Favorable TV Coverage," Central News Agency, Mar. 4, 2000; "State TV Stations Want the KMT to Back Off," editorial, *Taipei Times*, Mar. 23, 2000 (<http://www.taipeitimes.com/news>); "Media Biased in Reporting Election News: Opinion Survey," Central News Agency, Mar. 25, 2000.

candidate for one term and the “red” faction’s candidate for the next. In 1996 President Lee Teng-hui was persuaded to try to rein in these increasingly independent and corrupt politicians. An interparty agreement to convert these posts from elective to appointive was reached in the National Development Conference of December 1996, but never enacted.

On the theory that reforms come in packages, not as isolated measures, the KMT and the DPP have opportunities to undertake another round of democratic innovation against the subtle, perverse intrusions of money politics in public affairs. Biased and corrupt practices were attacked for more than four years, but with little effect. Insofar as public outrage against their continuation contributed to Soong’s defection from the KMT and the defeat of the party, the way may now be open for a series of new reform opportunities.

The One-China Problem

If inequality of resources among political parties placed limits on Taiwan’s democratic progress, a still graver impediment has been the citizenry’s lack of control over its own agenda. As in 1996, when China conducted psychological and diplomatic warfare through military exercises and missile firings near Taiwan to deter voters from electing Lee Teng-hui as their president, voters in March 2000 went to the polls under a barrage of mainland threats aimed at dissuading voters from choosing Chen Shui-bian. A white paper, “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue,” promulgated on February 21 by the Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of China’s State Council, threatened that China would resort to any “necessary means” to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the goal of reunification of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.¹⁸ Accordingly, the paper asserted, China was not obligated to rule out the use of force in achieving its objectives, and might resort to “all drastic measures possible” in the event that any of the “three ifs” occurred: if “a grave turn of events” led to the separation of Taiwan from China in any name; if Taiwan were invaded and occupied by foreign countries; or if the Taiwan authorities refused, without setting a date, the peaceful settlement of cross-strait reunification through negotiations.

Optimists, however, saw signs that China preserved flexibility in its cross-strait policy and pointed to significant omissions and inclusions in the white paper to support their case. There was no timetable or deadline for negotiations, no demand that Taiwan repudiate the state-to-state formula proposed by President Lee in July 1999, no specific ultimatum, and no suggestion of imminent attack. Beijing simply reaffirmed its preference for a peaceful settlement of the cross-strait division and offered a looser, albeit

¹⁸ The full text of the white paper, “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue,” may be found in, among other references, *China Daily*, Feb. 22, 2000, and online (<http://www.peopledaily.com.cn/english/features/taiwanpaper/taiwan.html>).

undefined, form of the “one country, two systems” formula already applied to Hong Kong and Macao. Presumably this formula would grant to Taipei a degree of independence in foreign policy, maintain Taiwan’s capitalist system and democratic processes, respect the identity of the island’s people as “New Taiwanese” as well as “Chinese,” and permit Taiwan to retain its own military. Yet the obvious objective of the white paper was to persuade voters on Taiwan to abandon Chen out of fear that the DPP’s call for a public referendum on Taiwan-China unification might be implemented if he won.

The white paper was followed by other threats from Beijing in the final days of the campaign. President Jiang Zemin and General Zhang Wannian of the People’s Liberation Army both warned Taiwan not to seek independence, and just three days before the election Prime Minister Zhu Rongji stated ominously that if Taiwan voters elected the wrong candidate they might not have another chance. With most observers predicting the possibility, if not probability, of a Chen victory, the stock market fell 7 percent in the week before the election, triggering an infusion from the government’s national stabilization fund. Thus, early claims from Beijing that China would not interfere in Taiwan’s “local” election dissolved into attempts by officials in Beijing to shape the outcome lest Taiwan drift further toward *de facto* independence. Indeed, Chen had argued that there was no need to change the island’s name or claim separation from China since Taiwan was a sovereign and effectively independent state. But the intimidation from Beijing may also have been a response to eroding popular support on the mainland for Communist rule. The KMT loss could be seen quite plausibly as a forecast of the Chinese Communist Party’s own future, not least because the causes of Lien Chan’s resounding defeat included the public’s revulsion against one-party rule, entrenched corruption, and “black and gold” politics. China’s slowing growth rate and pervasive inertia in the face of growing challenges, as well as the spread of religious-based movements such as Falungong and Zhonggong, suggested the potential for internal instability on the mainland, which could also frustrate China-Taiwan unification.

Of course, Beijing’s threats were counterproductive once again. Not only did a plurality of the people of Taiwan elect Chen Shui-bian, but the public’s strengthened resolve also made it unlikely that either China or the United States could force Taiwan into untenable negotiations. In addition, the attempts to intimidate Taiwan appeared to validate “the China threat” and garnered adverse publicity for China and sympathy for Taiwan in the global press.

The election outcome also demonstrated the frustration of the people of Taiwan over their diplomatic isolation. They may assume that as president, Chen will accentuate Taiwanese culture and national identity, and leaders in China and the United States would be wise to accept this likelihood. For China, Taiwan, and the United States, Chen’s election presents an important opportunity for a fresh approach to cross-strait relations. Although during the

campaign he (like his opponents) stated that Taiwan was sovereign and independent of the PRC, he opposed any official declaration of independence unless Taiwan were attacked, thus marking a retreat from an earlier DPP position. Moreover, although Chen, like Soong and Lien, opposed China's "one country, two systems" formula, all of them made conciliatory appeals to China during the campaign. Just as Soong and Lien offered to open talks with China, Chen offered to visit the mainland prior to his inauguration and promised not to write Taiwan's separate sovereign status into the constitution. Accordingly, the moderated DPP positions left little difference between Chen and the other two top presidential contenders.

Chen is not, however, the only major figure who may have to modify a position in response to the preferences of Taiwan's voters. Leaders in Beijing and Washington have to do so as well if cross-strait tensions are to be defused. The DPP has been given power by public demand to move Taiwan's government toward greater accountability through checks and balances in the political system and to relegate money politics to the past. In addition, the home-grown DPP, which bears the heritage of neither the KMT's mainland origins nor its past authoritarian repression, may begin to express more representatively what the people of Taiwan desire in terms of their political and commercial institutions, interests, and values.

Projecting Alternative Futures

Cross-strait relations will prove difficult for Chen Shui-bian, especially if China establishes a timetable for unification talks or refuses to negotiate unless Chen first agrees that the "one China" principle means that central control emanates from Beijing and that Taiwan is a province of the PRC. Chen claimed he would not negotiate on that basis, although he expressed willingness to talk about the concept of one China. Chen's insistence that both the direction of special relations and any change in the status quo must have the public's consent is not apt to be viewed favorably by Beijing. In the case of Hong Kong's retrocession, authorities in Beijing did not even allow Hong Kong officials to represent the public at negotiations, much less appeal directly to public opinion through surveys or referenda. If Chen keeps his promise to reflect the public's views, he could easily affront China. Polls have repeatedly shown that the people of Taiwan overwhelmingly prefer the status quo to movement toward either independence or unification, which is to say that they do not want to be governed by the authorities in Beijing.¹⁹ Chen acknowledged that Taiwan and China share a common culture, ancestry, and (to some extent) history, and that Taiwan's relationship with China is there-

¹⁹ See, for example, the polls conducted regularly for the Mainland Affairs Council by four polling firms or centers, available in Chinese and English from the Council Offices in the Executive Yuan, Taipei (<http://www.mac.gov.tw/pos/>).

fore special and closer than with other countries.²⁰ But he viewed Taiwan as a nation with independent sovereignty and not as a part of the People's Republic of China. Indeed, the DPP claims that Taiwan has already met the conditions of independent statehood since it has a defined territory (including Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu, and other islands), has effectively governed a population of some 22 million, and has chosen its government through democratic elections. The DPP can also claim that domestic polls show that Taiwan's people view it as an independent nation.²¹

The DPP's China policy calls for track-two diplomacy, beyond the formal diplomacy of track one. Track-two diplomacy is that of scholars, experts, and nongovernmental officials acting as private persons in informal discussions—that is, outside government control—to explore mutual understandings.²² DPP policy also calls for Taiwan to play an active role in regional security and maintains that cross-strait stability can only be temporary in the absence of China's own democratization. Hence, the DPP has advocated Taiwan's promotion of local-level elections within China and of relations with the overseas arms of the democratic movement in China. Above all, the DPP has pointed to Taiwan as proof that “oriental despotism” does not have to be endured by Chinese people.²³

In economic policy, the DPP naturally wants to protect and advance Taiwan's economy, but by placing a new emphasis on integration with advanced nations. It looks to joint ventures with China and other developing nations in industries that are declining in Taiwan or cannot be developed domestically. Like Lee Teng-hui, however, DPP leaders fear too much dependence on China's market. They estimate that 18 percent of Taiwan's exports are now shipped to the PRC, and that by 2005 that figure will reach 26 percent if the rate of increase of Taiwan's exports to China does not change. Because of the imbalance (China exports only 2.5 percent of its products to Taiwan), the DPP has pointed out that Taiwan will be the loser in any conflict that harms trade. Consequently, the DPP has called for an “advance alarm system” consisting of a cap of 15 to 20 percent on exports to China (the percentage varying by industry) and measures to enhance China's technical reliance on Taiwan in order to increase the cost to China of any trade war. It seeks to sell more goods to developed nations, expand Taiwan's

²⁰ The chairman of the DPP, Lin Yi-hsiung, reiterated a point made by Peng Ming-min, the party's presidential candidate in 1996, that Taiwan could develop closer ties with China than with any other country, if China's leaders only would allow it. “No’ to China but ‘Yes’ to Common Market,” *Straits Times* Interactive (Singapore), Nov. 7, 1999 (<http://straitstimes.asial.com.sg/>).

²¹ See National Policy Committee and National Security Subcommittee, “China Policy White Paper,” Democratic Progressive Party, Nov. 1999, p. 3.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 7. The origins of the idea of dual tracks in diplomacy are traced in and the idea applied to Taiwan-China affairs by Ralph N. Clough, *Reaching Across the Taiwan Strait: People to People Diplomacy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993).

²³ “China Policy White Paper,” pp. 8–9.

financial market to minimize the impact of Chinese capital in Taiwan, and improve the audits of inbound Chinese capital.²⁴

Another potential sticking point is the DPP's constraint on direct air links. Chen's team knows that direct air links would reduce business travel costs and help Taiwan to develop as a regional operations center. It also believes that profits from direct air links should be shared, but wants all such links to be made by Taiwan-based carriers to ensure that the island's security is not threatened by inbound mainland planes.²⁵ As part of the policy liberalizing direct air links, the DPP also called for direct navigation and shipping across the Taiwan Strait to reduce costs and to attract cross-national industries to Taiwan. Kaohsiung and Keelung could be opened in exchange for China's opening international harbors such as Guangzhou, Dalian, Shanghai, Qingdao, and Tianjin. The DPP has acknowledged that if Taiwan is to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) it cannot expect indefinitely to import China's goods only through third places. Nor would Taiwan be able to restrict China's capital and personnel or blacklist China's products in violation of the spirit of the WTO (unless dumping or a threat to national security could be proved).²⁶

**Chen
acknowledged
that Taiwan
must coexist
with China.**

The PRC, for its part, has continued to insist there is only one China, that Taiwan is part of it, and that the PRC is its sole legal government. Mainland leaders have repeatedly refused to rule out the use of force. Regarding the use of force and the "three ifs" presented in the February white paper, Beijing leaders may have left themselves room to interpret Chen's election and the policies he pursues as a "grave turn of events" and Chen's commitment to embrace the demo-

cratic process and public opinion as central to a scheme to divide China. Beijing could view Chen's rejection of its preconditions as a refusal to negotiate a timely, peaceful settlement. Still, as we have noted, some observers found reasons for optimism in China's white paper, and if Beijing were to read the signals from the Chen campaign as sincere, it could grasp the opportunity for constructive discussions. The Chen team sought common ground between the DPP and Chinese Communist Party because both have fought the oppression of the KMT. DPP members viewed themselves as agents of a fresh start, one that is free of the KMT's legacies. Chen and his followers acknowledged that Taiwan must coexist with China and that Taiwan cannot confront China for a long time or be separated from China's market. Chen called for open talks on any topic with China and expressed a willingness to turn from passive to active negotiations.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 14–15.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5. This point was reiterated in the authors' interview with Bi-Khim Hsiao, director, DPP Department of International Affairs, Mar. 2000.

²⁶ "China Policy White Paper," pp. 11, 13.

What are the prospects, in the wake of Chen's victory, for the United States? American leaders have tended to limit Taiwan's breathing space, but the DPP leadership may now be able to speak on behalf of the people of Taiwan in a way the KMT could not. That could put Taipei's leaders at odds with the hopes of officials in Washington, many of whom congratulated Taiwan on its democratic development but failed to recognize the people's right to self-determination. In the past, the United States has "acknowledged" the position held by the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to the effect that Taiwan is part of China. But now the position held in Taiwan by the majority, who are both "old" and "new" Taiwanese, may prove to be different from that of the KMT's "one China" view. If the American signatories to the Shanghai Communiqué could acknowledge the position purportedly held by Chinese people on Taiwan's side of the strait thirty years ago, successors in Washington surely cannot fail to take note of evidence that Chinese and Taiwanese people on the island a generation later take a different position from the one attributed to their elders in 1972. As Taiwan's democracy is consolidated, and if proposed reforms are undertaken seriously, it will be more difficult for American politicians to turn a blind eye to the increasing disparity between China's and Taiwan's political systems. If Taiwan's people, who are understandably proud of their achievements, aspire to self-determination in response to the international diplomatic blockade of their polity, increasingly difficult decisions will confront Washington in the future.

But difficult decisions lie ahead for the people of Taiwan, as well. A source of great frustration for them is their lack of control over an important part of Taiwan's agenda. Elites in Beijing, and some in Washington, have tended to discount the democratic beliefs and practices of the voters of Taiwan as arbitrary, unimportant, and temporary in deference to the unification plans of the PRC. Those voters, however, have taken many steps in democratization and are well aware of others that lie ahead. It remains to be seen how many more such steps they will have to take before other people begin to take Taiwan's democracy seriously.



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Flashpoint in the Taiwan Strait

by June Teufel Dreyer

Of all the issues now straining relations between Washington and Beijing—the large trade imbalance in favor of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Chinese allegations that a U.S. bomber knowingly targeted its embassy in Belgrade, American suspicions of Chinese espionage and involvement in nuclear proliferation, and concerns over human rights—none has more potential for rapid escalation into armed hostilities than the standoff in the Taiwan Strait.¹

The potential for military conflict now is even greater than during the standoff four years ago. In 1995–96 Beijing urged people not to vote for incumbent Republic of China (ROC) president Lee Teng-hui because he covertly favored Taiwan independence. However, whatever his hidden sentiments, Lee never publicly called for independence, whereas his major opponent, Peng Ming-min, advocated independence in the most outspoken terms. The invective heaped on Lee notwithstanding, the Chinese leadership understood that Lee was by far the preferable candidate.

Beijing now confronts a much different situation. The “moderates” lost the election to Chen Shui-bian, whom Beijing has much more reason to think seeks independence for Taiwan. Although he toned down his rhetoric during the election campaign, Chen has for many years championed the idea of holding a plebiscite on Taiwan's status. Since opinion polls have consistently showed that only a small minority of Taiwan's citizens favor unification, Beijing has vehemently opposed such a plebiscite—unless the citizens of the mainland are allowed to vote as well. Even those in Taiwan who favor unification generally add important preconditions, such as democratization of the mainland, that are unlikely to happen soon, if at all. Moreover, apart from his stance on a plebiscite, Chen is an unknown quantity to Beijing, whereas Lee had been president since January 1988 and vice president for several

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Foreign Policy Research Institute conference “Flashpoints in Asia,” Philadelphia, May 12, 2000.

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years before that. Hence, the Chinese leaders are much more apprehensive about the new president and his likely course of action.

Vicious Cycles Lead Downward

There has been a marked change for the worse over the past decade, when cross-strait tensions were at a historic low and observers were optimistic that an amicable *modus vivendi* could be worked out by the two sides. It is the contention here that a vicious cycle began when the Clinton administration issued a policy review regarding Taiwan in September 1994. While phrased in such a way as to seem evenhanded, the review in fact placed new restrictions on Taiwan. These stimulated efforts by the ROC government to break free of U.S. restrictions, in turn sparking vigorous resistance from the mainland government. Beijing and Taipei have been maneuvering for advantage ever since, while Washington attempts to reduce the possibility that a miscalculation by either side will cause an armed confrontation. The United States has also sought to maintain its policy of strategic ambiguity in the face of strident demands by both sides for clarification.

The 1980s saw unprecedented economic growth in China, where the gross domestic product increased by double-digit percentages nearly every year. Particularly in coastal areas, skyscrapers multiplied, airports expanded, and a new class of wealthy entrepreneurs emerged. Though civil liberties fell far short of Western norms, Chinese had more freedom to speak and act than at any time since the PRC was founded in 1949. The country became a darling of foreign investors, many of them from Taiwan. These "Taiwanese compatriots," as the official Chinese media regularly referred to them, poured billions of dollars into the mainland's economy. To be sure, the exchange was not without problems. Chinese workers sometimes accused bosses from Taiwan of exploitative practices, and mainland thieves targeted tourists and business people from Taiwan and even killed some of them.² However, from the perspective of American policymakers the overall prognosis was positive. Some frictions notwithstanding, mutual contact would foster mutual understanding, and economic growth on the mainland would result in democratization. The economies of Taiwan and the mainland would intertwine, and economic integration would lead to political integration.

At the end of the 1980s, however, two events jarred the mainland and Taiwan out of these seemingly synchronized trajectories. First, President

² One of the worst incidents occurred in April 1994, when 24 tourists from Taiwan on an excursion on Zhejiang's Qiandao lake were robbed and locked into the hold of their boat, which was set on fire. There were no survivors. The suspicions of the victims' relatives were aroused when mainland police could find no eyewitnesses, and officials cremated the remains before an independent investigation could take place. For Beijing's reply, see "Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait Are Torn By Sorrow and Anger, and the Souls of the Deceased Are Comforted Through Strict Law Enforcement," *Xinhua*, June 17, 1994.

Chiang Ching-kuo, son of and heir to Chiang Kai-shek, who had fled to Taiwan with his Kuomintang (KMT) government in 1949, died in January 1988. His successor, the Taiwan-born vice president Lee Teng-hui, had been educated at elite universities in Japan and the United States and had no ties to the mainland. He accelerated the pace of democratization begun under Chiang Ching-kuo. Since native-born Taiwanese, as opposed to the mainlanders who had arrived with Chiang Kai-shek, formed the great majority of the population, democratization inevitably meant Taiwanization as well. More Taiwanese were elevated to decision-making positions, greater use was made of Hokkienese speech as opposed to Mandarin, and more attention was given to traditional Taiwanese art forms.³ A uniquely Taiwanese identity, distinct from that of the mainland, began to evolve. Lee, who enjoyed popularity ratings of around 90 percent during his early years in office, also responded to his constituents' concerns that the mainland was slowly squeezing out his country's international living space. In the early 1990s the possibility of the ROC's being readmitted to the United Nations began to be discussed seriously, and legislators and government officials began lobbying other countries to support Taiwan's membership. A new policy of "flexible diplomacy" was introduced under which Taiwan indicated its willingness to participate in multinational organizations despite the PRC's presence. Where Beijing's objections made official visits to foreign countries difficult, Taiwan's diplomats made unofficial visits under the guise of playing golf, visiting famous sites, and so forth. The practice was dubbed "vacation diplomacy."

A second factor that set the two states on different trajectories was the appearance of cleavages on the mainland that threatened to undermine the regime's stability. Many of these were the direct results of rapid economic growth. The gap between rich and poor widened, creating envy among the less favored. Coastal provinces boomed while inland areas fell behind. Some provinces even aspired to economic autarky and attempted to ban imports from other regions of China.⁴ Inflation, which had been strictly controlled by the Communist government, recurred, severely damaging people who lived on fixed incomes. These and other discontents culminated in mass demonstrations in Beijing and elsewhere during the spring of 1989. Put down by an apparently reluctant military in early June, the demonstrations seemed to leave the Communist Party and government afraid of its own people. Policies became more repressive, though never so much as during the Mao years.

³ There is disagreement as to whether Hokkienese should be considered a dialect or a language. The PRC, along with some linguists elsewhere, regards it as a dialect of Mandarin. Others believe that Mandarin, Hokkienese, Hakka, and other tongues evolved from the same linguistic tree but are separate languages. See Shih Cheng-feng, "Ethnic Differentiation in Taiwan," *Journal of Law and Political Science*, no. 4 (1995), pp. 89–111.

⁴ In June 2000, the Chinese central news agency expressed concern that the PRC would be unable to embrace globalization until it could first achieve a unified national market. It called for elimination of local protectionism or "vassal separatism," which was distorting market competition. See "Breaking Barriers: China's 'Nationalization' Drive," *Xinhua*, June 30, 2000.

With communist ideology moribund and no charismatic leader in sight, the party/government began to encourage nationalism, perhaps as a way to shore up its diminished legitimacy with the citizenry. One component of the concern with nationalism was increased attention to “recovering” Taiwan, even as a feeling of separation was developing on the other side of the strait.⁵

The significance of these different trajectories was not immediately evident. Taiwan investors were among the first to return to the mainland after the Tiananmen incident in 1989, and each side established semiofficial organizations to handle outstanding problems such as fishing disputes, repatriation of illegal immigrants, and the return of hijacked airplanes. In 1991 the government of Taiwan renounced its claim to be the legitimate ruler of the mainland, and in 1992 mainland official Tang Shubei proposed a compromise to resolve the issue of the one-China principle under which Beijing had insisted that all negotiations must proceed. Both sides would temporarily table the issue of the meaning of one China and take a more pragmatic approach to resolve some practical issues generated by the exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland. In 1993 the heads of the two sides’ semi-official organizations met on neutral ground in Singapore and reached agreement on several more matters including emergency contacts, notarization of documents, and mail deliveries. Taiwan’s representative described the event as “a historic step after nearly forty years of separation,” and the mainland representative said it was “important for the continuing development of Taiwan-mainland relations.” What came to be called the Koo-Wang talks, after the names of the respective representatives, would henceforth be held on a regular basis.⁶ On an informal level, residents of the Taiwan-held offshore islands began a thriving trade with mainland fishermen. Until a few years before, the offshore islands had been bombarded regularly by the Chinese military. Island residents fashioned souvenirs from spent shell casings for sale to tourists and expressed confidence that cross-strait hostilities had gone the way of the Cold War.

In May 1994 the U.S. State Department, mindful of Beijing’s hostility to Taiwan’s vacation diplomacy, refused to allow Lee Teng-hui to leave the airport while his trans-Pacific flight refueled in Honolulu. Anxious to avoid publicity, American diplomats directed the president’s party to a separate terminal with reportedly shabby facilities and a substandard rest room. Lee refused to leave the plane. There was an immediate outcry from the American press and from Taiwan’s many supporters in Congress: the elderly leader of a democratic country had been insulted by an administration whose leader

⁵ Taiwan has never been part of the People’s Republic of China. Hence the quotation marks around recovery. For the same reason, unification will be used in preference to reunification except when a direct quote is involved.

⁶ For an analysis of the talks, see Hungdah Chiu, “The Koo-Wang talks and the Prospect of Building Constructive and Stable Relations Across the Taiwan Strait,” *Issues and Studies*, Aug. 1993, pp. 1–36.

had publicly received the likes of Gerry Adams, head of the terrorist-linked Sinn Féin, in the White House.

Apparently undaunted by the uproar, the administration in September issued the Taiwan Policy Review, which declared, among other things, that the administration would “not permit visits to the United States by Taiwan’s leadership” and did “not support Taiwan’s entry into the United Nations, or into any other organization that recognizes only states.” In what may have been an attempt to soften the blow of this rebuff, the policy review also indicated the administration’s willingness to “discuss with the Taiwan authorities a name change for its unofficial offices in the United States.”⁷ Although failing to soothe the sensitivities of Taiwan or its American supporters, this gesture did succeed in angering Beijing, which has always been acutely aware of the significance of gestures with symbolic import.⁸ The review also strengthened Lee’s resolve to break out of what he and other citizens of Taiwan saw as a further constriction of their country’s international living space.

Tensions Rise

Chances to do this were enhanced by the November 1994 U.S. elections. In what was interpreted as a reaction against the policies of the Clinton administration, voters gave Republicans control of both houses of Congress for the first time since the 1950s. The next stage in the vicious cycle began when Cornell University invited Lee Teng-hui to receive its distinguished alumnus award at a June 1995 ceremony. Lee immediately applied for a visa to visit the United States and, consonant with the terms of the Policy Review, the State Department rejected it. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, perhaps unwisely, personally assured the Chinese government that Lee would never be allowed to visit the United States. Congress intervened and prevailed. Had it not been for the wholly unnecessary provisions of the Policy Review, the visa could have been granted with the understanding that if Lee ever wanted another there should be a minimum of publicity. Instead, the circumstances preceding the granting of the visa turned his visit into high political theater. Lee was met in Los Angeles by various prestigious American supporters, and his acceptance speech at Cornell received maximum press coverage. The mainland’s leadership fumed and counted the number of times (nearly twenty) that Lee used the dreaded phrase “Republic of China,” which implied a separate, sovereign status for Taiwan. Beijing

⁷ Dick Kirschten, “The Other China,” *National Journal*, Oct. 8, 1994, pp. 12–15.

⁸ An agreement was eventually reached that allowed the Taiwan government to change the name of its unofficial embassy from the confusing “Coordination Council for North American Affairs” (CCNAA) to “Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office” (TECRO).

immediately cancelled the second round of Koo-Wang talks and looked for other ways to retaliate.

The next stage of the vicious cycle began in July 1995 with a series of missile tests and war games that continued until Taiwan's presidential elections the following year. The PRC media heaped invective on Lee despite the fact that his major opponent was an avowed separatist. Some high-ranking Taiwan diplomats even speculated privately that Beijing's tantrums were calculated to win Lee votes while making sure that no future visits abroad took place. Lee won a stunning 54 percent of the vote against three opponents, allowing him to claim a mandate for the continuation of the policies that upset Beijing, while the United States, which dispatched two aircraft carriers to the region, appeared to have moved away from its strategic ambiguity and toward a tacit declaration that it would not allow the mainland to take Taiwan by force.

All was not as it appeared, however. To soothe Beijing, and perhaps to convince itself that ambiguity still existed, the Clinton administration quietly gave the mainland written assurances of what would later become

known as the "three noes": no support for Taiwan independence; no support for "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan"; and no support for Taiwan's membership in international organizations in which statehood is a requirement. Since these assurances were not publicly known, there was no reaction to them. But American critics charged that strategic ambiguity only invited miscalculation. Administration spokespersons replied that it would be unwise to give Taiwan a blanket assurance of U.S. support since it might tempt Taipei to take rash actions. One administration official sug-

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gested that the U.S. policy could more accurately be described as "strategic clarity but tactical ambiguity." The views of those who believed Clinton had tilted dangerously toward China were reinforced by the revelation that Clinton's fund-raising activities had included large illegal contributions from several sources with ties to the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party and government. Some of them had been entertained at the White House. The money was returned, but did not end the controversy over what favors, if any, the donors had expected. Critics of the administration also looked suspiciously at an FBI sting operation against Chinese exporters of illegal arms whose cover was exposed, apparently at the last minute, by the U.S. side, and took note of the administration's decision not to levy sanctions against the PRC for exporting nuclear weapons-related components to Pakistan in 1996.

The "Three Noes"

The next phase of the vicious cycle occurred in June 1998, when Clinton, while visiting Shanghai, publicly embraced the "three noes." Critics

had already speculated that the trip to China, which had originally been scheduled for that autumn, was moved up so that the president could minimize fallout from a court appearance concerning his alleged involvement in a sexual harassment case.⁹ Now they alleged that the public commitment was the price Beijing exacted for agreeing to move up the summit. The administration replied that the “three noes” represented no change in policy, although no previous administration had ever endorsed them.¹⁰ Both houses of Congress then passed resolutions affirming support for Taiwan—the Senate unanimously, 92 to 0, and the House with one dissenting vote, 390 to 1—and urging the president to insist on a “fourth no”: no threat or use of force against the island.¹¹ Strong Chinese efforts to get the Japanese government to endorse the three noes did not succeed, leaving Clinton more isolated.¹²

The perception of increasing pressure from Beijing and strong support from the U.S. Congress led to the next phase in the cycle: Lee Teng-hui’s July 9, 1999, statement that he thought that relations between China and Taiwan should be considered a “special to state-to-state relationship.” Although Lee did not mention the word “independence” or repudiate the one-China policy—clarifications he added later—his statement was regarded as provocative by Beijing. This time, the Clinton administration immediately dispatched envoys to both Beijing and Taipei to urge restraint. The mainland confined itself to a stream of angry anti-Lee rhetoric, while its warplanes strayed over the center line in the Taiwan Strait several times. However, Lee’s statement was widely applauded on Taiwan, where more than 70 percent of the population said they approved of the president’s “finally [calling] a spade a spade.”¹³

The KMT Presidential Defeat

Meanwhile, Taiwan prepared for another presidential election in March 2000, the most competitive in the country’s history. Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo had been anointed by indirect election without competition, while Lee Teng-hui had run as an incumbent in both of his bids. This time the campaign was an intense three-way contest among Lee’s vice president, a disaffected former KMT stalwart who broke with the party to run

⁹ The Paula Corbin Jones case, which was postponed at the last minute.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Richard Halloran, “Clinton’s Turnaround On Taipei Policy,” *Global Beat Issue Brief* no. 40, July 14, 1998, Center for War, Peace, and the News Media.

¹¹ Passed the Senate and House on July 10 and 17, 1998, respectively.

¹² “Obuchi, Jiang To Reaffirm 1972 Joint Communiqué,” *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Tokyo), Nov. 23, 1998. See also “Japan Flatly Rebuffs Pressure Over Taiwan, War Apology,” *Hong Kong Standard*, Oct. 29, 1998. According to Japanese sources, Beijing’s pressure tactics to state the three noes caused considerable resentment in Japan.

¹³ “ROC President Spells Out Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations,” Central News Agency, July 20, 1999. “Spade” quote from author’s interviews, Taipei, late July 1999.

as an independent, and Chen Shui-bian, a young lawyer who had gained fame by defending pro-independence demonstrators two decades before. The major campaign issue was political corruption, not mainland policy. Still, each candidate declared that he was the best qualified to bring about harmonious cross-strait relations, although none was able to explain exactly how he intended to do so. The Taiwan press frequently discussed candidates' views toward the PRC, concluding that there were in reality no significant distinctions among them.¹⁴ Chen had early on endorsed the special state-to-state concept; the KMT candidate could scarcely repudiate his mentor Lee's position; and the independent opted for describing the cross-strait relationship as "quasi-international."

Beijing released a white paper on relations with Taiwan shortly before the election. Its promulgation only hours after the departure of a high-profile American delegation, which was led by Deputy Secretary of State and Clinton confidant Strobe Talbott and had counseled moderation, appeared to be a calculated insult to the Americans. The white paper reflected mainland leaders' frustration with the slow pace of progress toward unification and declared that Taiwan could not defer negotiations indefinitely. It also accused the Taiwan authorities of moving away from the concept of one China and toward the "two states theory" implied by Lee's July 1999 statement. There was only one China, which was indivisible, and its capital was Beijing. The paper warned that the Chinese government would be "forced to adopt all drastic measures possible, including the use of force" should Taiwan manifest separatism by "formulating the constitution," "amending the constitution," "explaining the constitution," or passing legislation that would have the effect of changing the formal status of the ROC.¹⁵ Taiwan in turn accused the mainland of moving away from the 1992 consensus view that each side be allowed to define one China in its own way, and argued that the Republic of China had been a sovereign state continuously since its establishment in 1911. If China were in fact unified, it asked, why did Beijing bother to mention one China?¹⁶

In a further, heavy-handed attempt to influence the election, Beijing announced that it was willing to deal with the other candidates, but not with Chen, and the mainland press dutifully vilified him. Premier Zhu Rongji, generally regarded as a moderate, held a press conference to warn Taiwan's voters that they "might not get a second chance" if they voted for a pro-independence candidate.¹⁷ Despite, or perhaps because of, this opposition,

¹⁴ See, e.g., Lauren Chen, "Soong Hogs China Policy Limelight," *Taipei Times*, Jan. 3, 2000.

¹⁵ "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue," *Xinhua*, Feb. 21, 2000.

¹⁶ Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, *How Taipei Views Beijing's White Paper* (Taipei: Shanghai Printing Company, Apr. 2000).

¹⁷ Dave Boyer, "U.S. Cautions China Over Taiwan Threats," *Washington Times*, Mar. 17, 2000.

Chen eked out a three-point victory over the independent candidate, with the KMT's standard-bearer finishing well behind.

Rumors were rife that Beijing planned to strike in some way, and American officials counseled patience and prudence. Clinton, in what appeared to be a carefully considered choice of words, said that any solution of the cross-strait issue must have the assent of the people of Taiwan. In a press conference following the election, Chen stated that although the one-China policy could be part of a discussion agenda with the mainland, it could not be, as Beijing insisted, a precondition for such discussions.¹⁸ For Chen to have acceded to this demand would have meant conceding his negotiating position as a precondition to negotiations. It would also have been anathema to his constituents. Chinese officials found his statement unacceptable and demanded that Chen endorse the one-China principle in his May 20 inauguration speech. If he refused, they told an official U.S. delegation headed by National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, "relations between China and Taiwan will again fall into a tailspin." While U.S. participants expressed satisfaction with the discussions and characterized them as serious and thoughtful, one Chinese official rejoined that "tough and blunt" would have been better adjectives, and another said that "our understanding of the meeting in this case was very different from what the Americans said."¹⁹ There were allegations that the U.S. side had misrepresented the Chinese view, as one official stated flatly: "Sometimes the Americans have too much imagination. The Americans are hoping for ambiguity. But the Chinese government is not being ambiguous on this issue."²⁰

**Taiwan, to one
mainland
analyst, is a
"ticking time
bomb."**

Chen Shui-bian's position was delicate. Elected as the candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whose platform calls for a plebiscite on establishing a Republic of Taiwan, he could ill afford to alienate the people to whom he owed his victory. However, it also would have been exceedingly dangerous to restate those inflammatory principles, but difficult to say nothing. Chen tacitly opted to distance himself from his party.²¹ When one of his leading advisers stated that the new administration would not use the phrase "special state-to-state relations" in its official statements, angry supporters complained that he had blundered even before he took office. In addition to repudiating the special state-to-state concept, Chen had also sought to portray himself as "China's Nixon," with the impli-

¹⁸ "Chen Calls For 'Peace Summit,'" *Taipei Times*, Mar. 21, 2000.

¹⁹ John Pomfret, "Beijing Firm on Condition for Taiwan Talks," *Washington Post*, Apr. 8, 2000.

²⁰ Zhou Jianming, director of the Institute of Asian and Pacific Studies of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and adviser to the Chinese government, quoted in "Danger That Taipei May Misread Beijing," *Straits Times* (Singapore), Apr. 10, 2000.

²¹ In recognition of the similar phenomenon in Fifth Republic France, Harvey Sicherman has termed Chen's move a "neo-Gaullist levitation beyond party strife." See Sicherman, "Taiwan's New President: One If and Five Noes," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Note*, June 2, 2000.

cation that the most hard-line person might be the one able to take the greatest steps in terms of compromise. Critics pointed out that Nixon had sold out Taiwan in order to bargain with China and wondered what Chen thought he could use as a comparable bargaining chip.²²

For these reasons, Chen's May 20, 2000, inauguration speech was awaited with apprehension on all sides. In a conscious evocation of Mao Zedong's statement that "China has stood up" on the occasion of the founding of the PRC, Chen proclaimed, "Taiwan stands up." He noted that the long period of separation between the two sides and development of vastly different political systems and lifestyles had created a wall between them. Although the new president did not accede to the mainland's demand that he accept its definition of the one-China principle, he did promise Beijing "five noes," albeit conditionally. So long as "the Chinese Communist regime had no intention to use military force against Taiwan," he would not during his term in office declare independence, change the name of the country, write the state-to-state relationship into the constitution, promote a referendum to change the status quo, or abolish the National Unification Council.²³

Polls showed that over 70 percent of Taiwan's citizens approved of Chen's speech, and foreign analysts noted the careful efforts he made to assuage Beijing without surrendering Taiwan's sovereignty. The mainland, however, evinced no satisfaction. Within hours—evoking suspicions that the Taipei government had supplied Beijing with an advance copy of the inaugural address—mainland media denounced Chen as insincere and demanded again that he accept Beijing's definition of one China and remove the plebiscite plank from the DPP platform.²⁴ Beijing also rebuffed a further concession from Chen, in which, apparently under American pressure, he accepted the KMT formulation of one China that left each side free to use its own definition. While failing to satisfy Beijing, this concession caused consternation among his DPP supporters.²⁵

Beijing also warned Taiwan investors in the mainland against support of the DPP, Chen, or pro-independence forces. A major ROC petrochemical group announced that it was considering scaling back its mainland operations after surprise inspections of its facilities repeatedly disrupted work. The group's chair had backed Chen Shui-bian's presidential campaign.²⁶ A member of one of the mainland's most prestigious think tanks observed that polls

²² See, e.g., Cao Chang-ching, "Has Chen Already Failed the 'One China' Test?" *Taipei Times*, May 5, 2000.

²³ Chen Shui-bian, "Taiwan Stands Up: Toward the Dawn of a Rising Era," Republic of China Government Information Office, May 20, 2000 (<http://th.gio.gov.tw/pi2000/dow-2.htm>).

²⁴ Associated Press, "Beijing Demands Taiwan's DPP Drop Independence Plank," June 21, 2000.

²⁵ Andrew Perrin, "Taiwan Concessions Bring Criticism: Leader Faces Unrest Within Own Party," *USA Today*, July 6, 2000. Perrin quotes DPP leader Parris Chang as saying that the Clinton administration applied pressure on Chen through informal channels. When Chen was choosing his cabinet, there were persistent rumors that Washington warned Chen that it would find Parris Chang unacceptable as secretary of state. Chang was not offered the job. See also "Chen Has Gone Too Far This Time," *Taipei Times*, June 29, 2000.

²⁶ Reuters, "Pro-Chen Company Alleges Mainland Pressures," June 7, 2000.

in Taiwan showed a steady increase in the number of people who supported independence. Based on current trends, pro-independence sentiment could reach 50 percent by the time of the next presidential election in 2004. He called Taiwan a “ticking time bomb” that was apt to explode between 2004 and 2007.²⁷

China Builds Up Its Military

Adding to the tension is the marked growth in Beijing's military capabilities since 1995–96. To cite just a few examples:

- Chinese missiles pointed at Taiwan are more numerous and capable than ever. Several hundred M-9s and M-11s—solid-fuel, road-mobile missiles—now target Taiwan's air defense installations, airfields, naval bases, and logistics facilities, and land-attack cruise missiles are in development.²⁸ In addition, China apparently viewed the NATO bombing of Kosovo as evidence of the importance of air defenses. U.S. intelligence recently discovered that two new bases are being built opposite Taiwan for Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missiles.²⁹
- China has new surveillance planes. In late April, the Hong Kong press reported that eight Shaanxi Y-8s are being converted to maritime patrol.³⁰ These four-engine turbo-prop transports are equipped with the Racal Skymaster, a British maritime search radar that can detect and track multiple surface targets, even small boats and submarine periscopes, at a range of more than a hundred nautical miles.
- China is acquiring AEW (airborne early warning) aircraft, which will allow the air force to make much better use of the new planes acquired from Russia, the Su-27s and Su-30s. Despite Israel's cancellation, under pressure from Washington, of plans to sell Phalcon airborne radar systems, it now appears that the PRC may purchase similar equipment from Russia.³¹ The Phalcons, to be fitted onto Russian-built Il-76 transport planes, will replace land-based systems, thereby enhancing the Chinese air force's reach

²⁷ Yan Xuetong, “Taiwan: A Ticking Time Bomb,” *Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, May 15–21, 2000. Mr. Yan is a research fellow at the China Institute of International Relations in Beijing.

²⁸ *Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY 99 Appropriations Bill*, p. 4 (<http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/twstrait02261999.html>); *Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act*, pp. 14–15 (<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/jun2000/China06222000.html>).

²⁹ Bill Gertz, “Chinese Missiles Could Hit U.S. Forces,” *Washington Times*, Mar. 29, 2000.

³⁰ Trevor Hollingsbee, “Spy Plane Adds To PLA Arsenal,” *South China Morning Post*, Apr. 24, 2000.

³¹ Amnon Barzilai, “Russia Ready to Sell China Spy Plane If Israel Reneges,” *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), July 4, 2000.

and flexibility.³² Improved mid-air refueling capabilities will further increase effectiveness.³³

- China has purchased Sunburn (Moskit) SS-N-22 missiles from Russia, to be fitted onto two Sovremenny-class destroyers. The Moskits are reportedly designed to carry a 120-kiloton nuclear warhead, six times more powerful than the atomic bomb used at Hiroshima. Even with nonnuclear warheads, the Moskit is a menacing weapon, traveling at two and a half times the speed of sound, skimming along the water in a very low flight pattern, and capable of agile end-maneuvers to throw off defenses. American military sources have stated that the Moskit is possibly the most lethal antiship missile in the world and that the U.S. Navy has nothing that can stop it. The navy's Phalanx system can detect the Moskit, but has less than three seconds to calculate a fire solution—not enough time to stop the 750-pound warhead.³⁴

Aside from new weapons, several other developments have enhanced the strength and effectiveness of the Chinese military. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) began a round of training exercises in April and staged others before and after Chen's inauguration as president. Its air force has substantially increased training flights that cross the center line of the Taiwan Strait. Intensified propaganda within the military has gotten troops accustomed to the idea of fighting what the indoctrinating officers referred to as "real wars." Several PLA officers have noted that, despite American assessments that the PLA is currently incapable of prevailing in a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, most PLA officers believe that they could and therefore would not be deterred from attacking.³⁵ In recognition of the military's need to enhance its proficiency in science and technology, new educational programs are being phased into military academies, and a "National Defense University for Science and Technology" has been founded.

In the foreign policy arena, a number of high-ranking Chinese military and diplomatic officials traveled abroad or entertained their opposite numbers in Beijing as part of an effort to gain other countries' agreement that there

³² William Safire, "Ally Vs. Customer," *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 2000; Greg Torode, "The Military Ties That Bind With Israel," *South China Morning Post*, Apr. 13, 2000.

³³ "China Refuels, Mid-Flight," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 11, 2000, p. 12.

³⁴ Charles Smith, "Navy to Get Russian 'Sunburn' Advanced Missile. Nuclear Warhead Version Already in China's Hands," *ChinaGate*, Apr. 25, 2000.

³⁵ Brian Hsu, "China Preparing Post-Inaugural Military Exercise," *Taipei Times*, Apr. 25, 2000; Sofia Wu, "Defense Minister Maps Out ROC's Military Build-Up Plans," part 1, Central News Agency, July 2, 2000; "PLA Reportedly Preparing Troops for War With Taiwan," *Ming Pao*, Apr. 25, 2000; Author's interviews, Nov. 1999. An article in a Chinese Communist Party-owned Hong Kong newspaper mentions the "unusual arrogance" of some soldiers and military experts in denigrating the fighting power of the United States. See Kao Chieh-chien, "What Limits Has 'Unrestricted Warfare' Exceeded—Also Discussing the Phenomenon Where Readers and Experts Stick To Their Own Views," *Ta Kung Pao*, June 29, 2000.

is just one China, that Taiwan is a part of that China, and that other countries will not interfere in China's domestic affairs. In other words, they seek assurances of no third-party intervention if China attacks Taiwan.

As China quietly and methodically makes preparations to seize Taiwan by force, Taipei's military suffers from major deficiencies. It lacks long-range surveillance aircraft, and Taiwan's 130 Indigenous Defense Fighters (IDFs), the backbone of the air force, have been described by a knowledgeable former American officer as essentially "toys," since the aircraft can carry either ordnance or fuel, but not adequate amounts of both. In any case, Taiwan faces a shortage of pilots.³⁶

The Role of the United States

The Clinton administration has yet to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and appears determined to suppress any information that might suggest otherwise. In February 2000 a Pentagon report indicated that Taiwan was far more vulnerable to attack from China than previously recognized and that the isolation of its military was causing further technological shortfalls. Because the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act requires the United States to supply Taiwan with such defensive weapons as are necessary to maintain a balance of power in the Taiwan Strait, the implication of the Pentagon report was that additional weapons sales would be necessary. Instead, the administration stamped the report "secret" and essentially tried to bury it, although news of the study was apparently leaked to the *Washington Post* in late March.³⁷

In April the administration denied Taiwan's request to purchase four Arleigh Burke-class destroyers equipped with Aegis antimissile systems. It promised to sell a Pave Paws radar, but refused to specify the exact model, which could significantly affect Taiwan's ability to detect missile launches and incoming aircraft. The administration agreed to the sale of AMRAAMS, but demanded that they be stored in the United States, prompting Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to ask whether Taiwan was supposed to wait until it was attacked and then call Federal Express to request delivery.³⁸

No consensus exists in the United States as to the wisdom of arms sales to Taiwan. Some have argued, for example, that keeping the AMRAAMS in the United States could serve as a warning to the Chinese not to buy a comparable air-to-air missile, the AA-12 or R-77 "Amraamski," from Russia. The greater ranges of those missiles (up to 150 kilometers) reduces the

³⁶ Associated Press, "Jet Fighters Aplenty, But Where Are the Pilots?" *Straits Times*, Apr. 26, 2000.

³⁷ Thomas Ricks, "Taiwan Seen As Vulnerable To Attack," *Washington Post*, Mar. 31, 2000; Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring, Taiwan Report Held," *Washington Times*, Mar. 31, 2000.

³⁸ Jane Perlez, "US, With Eye on China, Settles on Weapons for Taiwan," *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 2000; John Godfrey, "Taiwan's Defense Package Criticized," *Washington Times*, Apr. 19, 2000.

effectiveness of the center line of the Taiwan Strait as a buffer, since the strait is only about 100 kilometers wide at its narrowest point. This reservation was mooted by reports that the Chinese air force would shortly receive the first batch of AA-12s from Russia.³⁹

The usefulness of the Aegis system for Taiwan has also been disputed. Michael Tsai, a legislator from Taiwan's DPP, has argued that the military would benefit more from greater efficiency than from an antimissile system, although there is no reason to consider them mutually exclusive.⁴⁰ Proponents point out that Aegis will enhance defense against cruise missiles and provide Taiwan with the integrated technological base for sea-based ballistic missile defense by enabling the military to share data among airborne radar aircraft and surface ships.⁴¹ While some American supporters seem to consider the sale of Aegis systems a litmus test of the administration's support for Taiwan, others argue that the island's defense would be better served by procurement of land-based rather than sea-based systems. Their reasons, however, are as much based on political considerations—i.e., China's objections—as military factors.⁴² Theater missile defense (TMD) has raised further questions about feasibility and cost effectiveness that have been compounded by the PRC's determined opposition to its development. Beijing has in fact warned the United States and Japan that deploying TMD would touch off an arms race in the region.

The merits of specific weapons sales aside, there is a larger question of defense versus security. It has often been argued that providing advanced arms to Taiwan would ultimately undercut the island's security by goading Beijing into more aggressive behavior. On closer inspection, however, this argument has little merit. If Beijing's anger induces Washington not to sell arms, then Beijing will learn only that its threats have their desired effect. Even the Clinton administration appeared to acknowledge this after a recent warning by China that it would be forced to modernize its nuclear forces if Washington were to proceed with a national missile defense system. An unnamed senior official in Washington indicated that the administration believed that the PRC would continue to modernize its nuclear arsenal regardless of U.S. action.⁴³ While it is proper to listen to Beijing's concerns, as it is those of other states, it is unacceptable to allow Beijing to exercise a veto power over American decision-making. China has consistently opposed *all* weapons sales to Taiwan and will in all probability continue to do so. Despite sharp debate, analysts agree that the most pressing needs of the Taiwan

³⁹ Nikolay Novichkov, "First Lot of Moskit Missiles Shipped to China," *Itar-TASS*, May 16, 2000.

⁴⁰ Michael Tsai, "Military Needs Efficiency, Not Aegis," *Taipei Times*, Apr. 23, 2000.

⁴¹ William Ide, "No Go For Aegis Viewed As Prudent Move," *Taipei Times*, Apr. 29, 2000; personal communication from Dr. Larry Wortzel, May 8, 2000, Washington, D.C.

⁴² Kenneth Allen et al., "Theater Missile Defenses in the Asia-Pacific Region," Henry L. Stimson Working Group Report (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, June 2000), pp. vii, ix.

⁴³ Jane Perlez, "China Likely To Modernize Nuclear Arms, U.S. Believes," *New York Times*, May 12, 2000.

military include improved defenses against cyber attack and incoming missiles, better antisubmarine warfare capability, expanded military training programs, and a restructuring that would emphasize naval and air power rather than ground forces. The United States has an obvious role to play in some of these areas, and yet U.S. arms sales to Taiwan were down by 62.4 percent in fiscal year 1999 compared to 1998, from \$1.5 billion to \$559 million.⁴⁴ Many of the weapons purchased between 1992 and 1998 resulted from agreements made by the Bush administration. The precipitous drop in 1999 would appear to indicate that the Clinton administration is loath to approve new sales.

In sum, the administration's own mismanagement of cross-strait relations has set in train a vicious cycle that threatens to destabilize the delicate equilibrium that prevailed when Clinton took office in 1992. Compounding the gravity of the situation, the administration has, whether by intention or inattention, weakened Taiwan's defenses and played down China's buildup. These developments are difficult to reconcile with broad American support for Taiwan's democratic government and way of life, or with the U.S. commitment, ensconced in the Taiwan Relations Act, to ensure a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue. Clinton's statement that any solution of the cross-strait relationship must have the assent of the people of Taiwan is an important step in the right direction. Whether it has come in time to avoid a confrontation depends to a large extent on Beijing's assessment of the credibility of that American pledge.



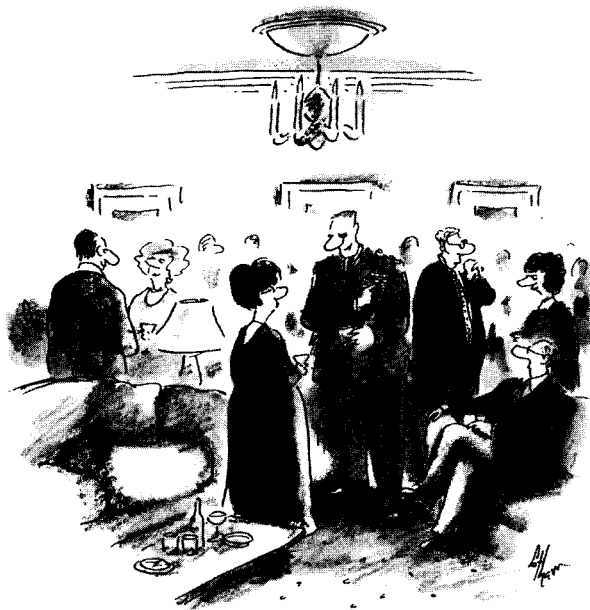
⁴⁴ Herman Pan and Sophia Wu, "US Arms Sales To Taiwan Down 62.4% in FY 1999," Central News Agency, Apr. 17, 2000.

TOP SECRET

The government says Wen Ho Lee may have planned to give U.S. nuclear weapon secrets to . . . Switzerland? Yes, really, Switzerland (Albuquerque Journal, March 9).

The U.S. intelligence community reports that Chinese spies are everywhere in America, lurking in "low-key" locales like public libraries (Washington Times, March 9).

After news of the Wen Ho Lee case broke, Los Alamos removed a copy of the periodic table of elements from its web site, lest some enemy "steal" that peculiarly American "secret" too.



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Correspondence

Not-So-Bad Medicine

To the Editor:

In his essay "Bad Medicine for Biological Terror" (Spring 2000), Andrew Bacevich's impassioned pleas and observations represent a valuable contribution to the debate about the American military's vaccination program against anthrax. My concern, however, has to do with his suggestion that the anthrax vaccine immunization program (AVIP) is merely a public relations gimmick.¹ To be sure, it wouldn't be out of character for the Clinton administration to be motivated by a desire for legitimacy and legacy, but in this instance I believe different factors are at work.

The experience of the Persian Gulf War, and especially the revelations about Iraqi and former Soviet work in biological weapons, are critical factors in the decision of the Department of Defense (DOD) to include anthrax vaccinations in the military's routine immunizations. General Colin Powell testified before Congress that he was "scared to death" by biological warfare (BW) and its potential effects on U.S. troops. The Soviets were able to manufacture tons of weaponized anthrax per week at just one of its facilities, and we still don't know if special knowledge concerning the preparation of anthrax has been shared among possible enemies of the United States.

Dr. Bacevich writes, "To the extent that those questioning the vaccination regime are mature, well-educated professionals who, in the case of the reservists and guardsmen, are also engaged in responsible civilian careers, it becomes difficult to dismiss them as naive, misinformed, or easily manipulated" (p. 223). No one is suggesting that those in the U.S. military who are resisting anthrax inoculations are simple-minded dolts. But it is surely reasonable to inquire as to their expertise in the health sciences. If a helicopter mechanic has serious objections to being vaccinated, I'd like to hear the data backing his claims, just as he would undoubtedly want to know why I (no aviation expert) thought the Jesus nut on his Apache was installed incorrectly.

¹ "In short, the anthrax vaccination program is as much about public relations as about military prophylaxis," p. 222.

One would like to see studies supporting a position concerning the vaccine's safety or lack thereof. In fact, several studies do exist, and if critics of the vaccine fail to cite them, one can only conclude that these critics are disingenuous, willfully ignorant, or both.²

Back in the 1920s, as the DOD reminds us, opposition to mandatory smallpox vaccinations for U.S. military forces was widespread. The critics of that program were much like the ones protesting anthrax shots today:

These otherwise highly competent laymen had very different reasons for opposing vaccination, but they shared two beliefs. They were convinced (1) that they knew more about infection and immunity than any doctors and life scientists who had ever lived, and (2) that Jenner's vaccine could only cause harm to and kill people, and had never prevented a single case of smallpox.³

If soldiers, sailors, and airmen choose to end their careers because of unfounded notions that the anthrax vaccine is unsafe, it is a sad moment. At the same time, however, I don't think that I'd want such individuals serving in the military anyway. In any event, the issue has nothing to do with my needs, but rather the unambiguous military code going back to World War I: If you refuse a mandatory inoculation, then out you go.⁴

Dr. Bacevich writes further that "a failure to [indict the current BW defense policy] might truly jeopardize U.S. national security, because persisting in a foolhardy vaccination program might undermine the trust that soldiers must have in their leaders and deplete actual military capabilities . . ." (pp. 226–27). My question would be, considering the experience of this administration: What trust? What actual military capabilities? Clinton didn't need a vaccination program to emasculate our defense establishment or bring the morale of our troops to a new-found nadir; he did that through other machinations. If anything, the AVIP *restores* some credibility to defense policy.

Dr. Bacevich also raises the matter of the presence of squalene (p.

² See "Surveillance for Adverse Events Associated with Anthrax Vaccination—U.S. Department of Defense, 1998–2000," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Apr. 28, 2000 (<http://www.cdc.gov/epo/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4916a1.htm>). "The findings indicate that rates of local reactions were higher in women than men and that no patterns of unexpected local or systemic adverse events have been identified." This report appeared after Dr. Bacevich's article, but the basic data are not confounded in any of the other studies. See also James C. Pile et al., "Anthrax as a Potential Biological Warfare Agent," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Mar. 9, 1998; Arthur M. Friedlander, "Anthrax," in *Textbook of Military Medicine*, ed. Frederick R. Sidell et al., *Part I: Warfare, Weaponry, and the Casualty: Medical Aspects of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997); Vittorio Demicheli et al., "The Effectiveness and Safety of Vaccines against Human Anthrax: A Systematic Review," *Vaccine*, vol. 16, no. 9/10 (1998); and Arthur M. Friedlander, Phillip R. Pittman, and Gerald W. Parker, "Evidence for Safety and Efficacy Against Inhalational Anthrax," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dec. 8, 1999, also available at (<http://www.anthrax.osd.mil/>).

³ Allan Chase, *Magic Shots: A Human and Scientific Account of the Long and Continuing Struggle to Eradicate Infectious Disease by Vaccination* (New York: Morrow, 1982), p. 72.

⁴ Martin Furmanski, "Unlicensed Vaccines and Bioweapon Defense in World War II," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Sept. 1, 1999, p. 822.

226, n. 26). Charges of the dangers of that chemical come from the same people who alleged that silicon breast implants caused all kinds of diseases. Neither theory has stood up to scientific scrutiny. No one remembers any squalene having been used in the anthrax vaccine because it is still not approved by the FDA. Tellingly, in a peer-reviewed article these same authors backtracked on their previous claims that squalene was used as an adjuvant during the Gulf War.⁵ Subsequent to their initial allegations, various lots of anthrax vaccine were tested and no squalene was found.⁶ The only claim that has been substantiated is that squalene has been detected in self-reporting veterans suffering from Gulf War Syndrome, a condition still lacking a definite clinical description.⁷ Those results, moreover, were derived from less-than-stringent, controlled conditions.

The matter of the anthrax vaccine's effectiveness against only a single strain (p. 227) is a red herring. Anthrax vaccine, even the one used in Russia, depends mostly (if not completely) upon the protective antigen (PA) factor in *Bacillus anthracis*, which is critical to how anthrax causes disease in mammals. If you can make the human body react to PA, you get to the source of the problem, i.e., anthrax bacteria, *regardless* of the particular strain. If the disease mechanism does not use PA, then it is not anthrax. If anything, the current vaccine is about as good as one can get in terms of fighting possible anthrax infection, and if the immune system is defeated even after building up immunity, then it is probably due to the amount of inoculum or to a host of other factors having nothing to do with alternate strains of *B. anthracis*.

The development of the anthrax vaccine actually grew out of U.S. BW research efforts, and as Dr. Bacevich points out, it has been used in the civilian population among tannery workers and veterinarians. But he omits—incorrectly, in my opinion—the threat of inhaled anthrax in the form of woolsorter's disease. For at least two hundred years, textile workers dealing with wool and other animal by-products faced infection and death from anthrax simply as an occupational hazard. Is it coincidental that since the use of anthrax vaccine, we haven't seen a case of inhalational anthrax in an industrial setting? When an anthrax expert admits that the data on the vaccine's efficacy in preventing inhalational anthrax are wanting, it is because so few human cases have ever been identified. There is a notable discrepancy here. The five workers in the study Dr. Bacevich cites (p. 230) are regarded by scientists as being too few to be statistically or scientifically significant. But

⁵ Pamela B. Asa, Yan Cao, and Robert F. Garry, "Antibodies to Squalene in Gulf War Syndrome," *Experimental and Molecular Pathology*, Feb. 2000, pp. 55–64.

⁶ Lt. Col. John Grabenstein, deputy director for clinical operations, at the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program Agency, wrote on Feb. 4, 2000, that "a DoD team is studying the feasibility of a validated test for antibodies to squalene." ProMED-mail post (<http://www.promedmail.org>).

⁷ For one attempt at clinical description, see K. Fukuda et al., "Chronic Multisymptom Illness Affecting Air Force Veterans of the Gulf War," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Sept. 16, 1998, pp. 981–88.

when a single National Guard aviator claims that he became gravely ill because of the anthrax vaccine, everyone seems to take him at his word.

Dr. Bacevich writes further, “As an interim defense against anthrax, the Defense Department should shift its emphasis from prophylaxis to treatment, administering antibiotics and vaccine to any soldiers exposed to the virus” (p. 235). First of all, anthrax is not a virus. Secondly, how would you know if someone has been exposed to anthrax? And if you did know, would treatment be available in time? Once symptoms become evident (one to three days after exposure, sometimes longer), mortality from anthrax is 80–90 percent or more—even with aggressive antibiotic treatment. Those are not great odds. Moreover, there seems to be a great deal of overconfidence regarding antibiotics. In Dr. Bacevich’s words, “Unlike the vaccine, antibiotics are effective against multiple strains of anthrax, complicating efforts by adversaries to design a variant of the virus that cannot be treated” (p. 235). Dr. Bacevich is correct to call ciprofloxacin “particularly promising,” but the former Soviet Union spent much time and effort developing strains of anthrax that were resistant to antibiotics, probably including ciprofloxacin.

Other potential BW agents such as plague, smallpox, and ebola virus certainly constitute possible threats to U.S. troops (p. 231). But there is no agent better suited to low-tech delivery than anthrax. And given the safety of the anthrax vaccine, we should provide our men and women with the best protection available. Bulletproof vests can’t stop high-velocity rounds, but we nevertheless distribute flak jackets to the troops.

Where Bacevich Is On Target

Despite these objections, the article without a doubt makes several important points. Dr. Bacevich’s review of BioPort and its founders is, I think, the best part of the article, and the matter of the plum contract with the Pentagon deserves much more scrutiny than it has received to date. (At the same time, it should be noted that \$4.36 per dose was a ridiculously low price for the vaccine requirements.) I also believe the discussion of civilian vulnerability to BW is absolutely accurate. Recall that until 1989, U.S. military personnel were routinely inoculated with vaccinia against smallpox, a relatively risky vaccine by any comparison. If Dr. Alibek is correct that the former Soviet Union armed ICBMs with smallpox, and that these were counter-value weapons (or “crowd pleasers”), then the U.S. civilian populace was for the most part immunologically naive, because childhood vaccinations for smallpox ended in 1972 in the United States.

That said, while it might make sense to vaccinate the larger population, the inoculation of U.S. civilians against anthrax is simply unrealistic. First, it is difficult enough to convince the American public to get vaccinated for infectious diseases they are more likely to encounter on a day-to-day

basis. Some organizations question the advisability or even need for the standard series of childhood vaccinations, and the Internet provides ample evidence of conspiracy theories and unfounded notions of health practice. Parents and researchers testifying before the House Reform Committee in April 2000 even suggested that childhood vaccinations were the cause of autism in children. That such a theory is seriously entertained in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary is symptomatic of the suspicion harbored by a significant portion of the American public. Aside from civilian support personnel who serve the DOD here and abroad, then, it is difficult to conceive of a successful campaign to inoculate the wider American public against anthrax. Instead, close monitoring of public health and emerging infectious diseases, perhaps coupled with pre-positioned stockpiles of certain antibiotics, may be the only practical measures to prepare for an anthrax attack on the continental United States.

The absence, to date, of an anthrax attack should not become a source of complacency when it comes to protecting our men and women in uniform, because such an attack remains plausible. In this context a comparison to polio immunization is instructive. There is a one in 2.4 million chance that an oral poliovirus vaccine will actually cause the disease—a small but unquestionably real risk.⁸ And yet, despite that danger—and despite the absence of a single case of poliomyelitis in the Western hemisphere since 1991⁹—polio vaccinations are still required in the United States and are considered an important means of safeguarding public health. The DOD faces an analogous situation with the anthrax vaccine. It has the opportunity to provide protection to U.S. troops, and it should do so.

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The author responds:

I thank Mr. Croddy for his thoughtful letter. By way of rejoinder, let me offer the following:

1. If during the Cold War the Soviets were able to manufacture tons of anthrax per week, why has it only now become imperative to protect U.S.

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Polio Vaccines: What You Need to Know," Feb. 1, 1999 (<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-polio.pdf>).

⁹ H. F. Hull et al., "Perspectives from the Global Poliomyelitis Eradication Initiative," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (supplement), Dec. 31, 1999/48 (SU01), pp. 50–56 (<http://www.cdc.gov/epo/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su48a11.htm>).

troops against the BW threat? How is it that the Department of Defense has only of late discovered that American soldiers are at risk?

2. I note that Mr. Croddy concedes the point that research on the efficacy of anthrax vaccine has employed a sample “too few to be statistically or scientifically significant.”

3. With regard to using antibiotics combined with vaccine to treat anthrax, the idea is not mine—it was the DOD’s planned response to any use of anthrax by Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War. That was a good enough response in 1991, but not now? Why? I note also that Mr. Croddy supports stockpiling antibiotics to treat civilians in the event of an anthrax attack. By what logic are the lives of civilians less valued than those of soldiers?

4. Mr. Croddy dismisses in a sentence BW threats other than anthrax because they are not as well suited to “low-tech delivery.” What is the rule of thumb here? Do U.S. adversaries shy away from high technology? Do they not have access to high technology? What evidence exists to support that?

5. Mr. Croddy doesn’t want opponents of the anthrax vaccination program serving in the military. He is likely to get his way. The fate of a few hundred servicemen and -women probably doesn’t matter in the long run—it evidently doesn’t matter to Mr. Croddy—but he and others who profess an interest in security would do well to be less cavalier about the impact of this misconceived and incompetently administered program within the ranks of those who continue to serve.

Mr. Croddy somehow reads my essay as arguing that the DOD’s anthrax vaccination program is a “public relations gimmick.” That is his phrase, not mine. If it were merely a PR stunt, it would be of little interest. But the anthrax vaccination program is in fact one telling bit of evidence that suggests how far the corruption of U.S. national security policy has advanced. Getting a shot won’t fix that problem.

Andrew Bacevich
Boston University

Review Essays

The Life of Mao Zedong **by Arthur Waldron**

Mao: A Life. By Philip Short. (New York: Henry Holt, 1999. 782 pp. \$37.50.)

Mao Zedong. By Jonathan Spence. (New York: Lipper/Viking, 1999. 188 pp. \$19.95.)

Mao: A Biography, revised and expanded edition. By Ross Terrill. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. 571 pp. \$24.95, paper.)

The first draft of Mao Zedong's biography was written, as is often the case, by journalists, and it was by and large highly positive. The immensely long *New York Times* obituary by former China correspondent Fox Butterfield, for example (which covered two full pages), distilled the existing consensus among China scholars and nicely captured the conventional wisdom of the moment when Mao's reputation touched its all-time acme.¹

According to that view, Mao's achievement surpassed the already remarkable fact that he had managed to rule China more completely and far longer than anyone else in the twentieth century. Most importantly, and in spite of his cruelty (he "brooked no opposition," Butterfield noted cautiously, and "executed hundreds of thousands"), Mao had been a thinker who had solved the twin riddles of postimperial Chinese history: namely, how to ground political authority and values after Confucianism, and how genuinely to modernize an economy hitherto based on peasant agriculture as old as the hills. Mao's boyhood dream had been to restore China "to its traditional place as a great nation," and at his death most agreed he had succeeded. "With incredible perseverance and consummately conceived strategy," wrote Butterfield,

¹ Fox Butterfield, "Father of Chinese Revolution, Leader of Long March Based Power on Peasants," *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1975.

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he harnessed the forces of agrarian discontent and nationalism to turn a tiny band of peasants into an army of millions, which he led to victory throughout China in 1949, after twenty years of fighting. Along the way the army fought battles as big as Stalingrad and suffered through a heroic march as long as Alexander's. Then after establishing the Chinese People's Republic, Mao launched a series of sweeping, sometimes convulsive campaigns to transform a largely illiterate and predominantly agricultural country encompassing almost four million square miles and a fifth of the world's population into a modern, industrialized socialist state. By the time of his death China had manufactured its own nuclear bombs and guided missiles and had become a major oil producer.

It is all very much larger than life. To reread the obituary today, however, almost exactly a quarter of a century after Mao's death, is to realize just how much has become known about Mao and how much has changed in China and the world. To be sure, the Chairman is still an official hero in China, and the endless lines at the Mao Mausoleum in Tiananmen Square suggest plenty of popular following as well. But exactly why he is a hero is no longer clear, because just about everything that has happened in China since his demise has rocked his reputation one way or another.

To begin with, the coup by Mao's personal bodyguard division scarcely a month after his funeral swept into prison the five radical successors, his widow Jiang Qing most importantly, for the sake of whose succession to power Mao had plunged China into disastrous turmoil, beginning with the Cultural Revolution. Clearly, Mao had not left his political house in order. Next came the revelations about the true costs of the Great Leap Forward, the agricultural and industrial campaigns that had been his brainchild in the preceding decade. Of these Butterfield notes judiciously that they ultimately "caused widespread disruption and food shortages." Well, it turns out, not exactly. Almost as soon as the Chairman was gone the Chinese government officially released census data that proved, under analysis by a team of American demographers, what had long been suspected: namely, that the Great Leap had caused the most catastrophic man-made famine in human history, costing between ten and forty million lives.² Mao had not solved the riddle of Chinese agriculture after all, and the *Times* had missed a major story. Then came the memoirs of Mao's personal physician, Dr. Li Zhisui.³ Dr. Li depicted Mao as a pathologically cold man who destroyed, emotionally and often physically, everyone who came close to him. He enjoyed the finest food while millions starved, and availed himself of an endless stream of women (he liked them young, ignorant, and adoring), whom he infected with venereal diseases. He never brushed his teeth and was utterly ignorant of much basic scientific and other knowledge.

² See Ansley J. Coale, *Rapid Population Change in China, 1952–1982* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1984). Coale was the leader of the team of demographers. For a more up-to-date account, see Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

³ *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994).

These are only three examples of many bombshells that have detonated since Mao's death, the net effect of which has been to destroy, claim by claim, nearly everything that was asserted in Mao's favor at his death.

Now we have three new, valuable biographies. Ross Terrill's *Mao: A Biography* was first published in 1980. It appears now with revisions, an excellent new introduction that skillfully sketches what has changed for the biographer of Mao over twenty years, an epilogue, postscript, and a new bibliography. Terrill, a Harvard-based scholar and writer, is concerned above all with Mao as an individual, and he paints a richly documented and fascinating portrait, full of insight, empathy, and even humor. Still, he points out, the historical and cultural background cannot be neglected: "In the end, Mao's qualities cannot be explained aside from the long-ripened qualities of Chinese civilization. Could Somalia produce a Mao? Could New Zealand? We cannot account for Mao's success merely by unwrapping him as an individual psychological package" (pp. 460–61).

Philip Short is a retired British journalist who has years of China experience and now lives in the south of France. His *Mao: A Life* has a somewhat different emphasis. Short is at his best explaining the twists and turns in Mao's bloody road to power—conveyed with the direct, masculine clarity that is characteristic of the best style of his long-time employer, the BBC.

As for Yale professor Jonathan Spence's succinct *Mao Zedong*, it shows by and large a sure sense for key events in historical narrative—whether those involve military operations in the Civil War, on which he is brief but very good, or the impact on Mao's life of a key emotional event, such as the end of his marital relationship with Jiang Qing (p. 134)—as well as an ability to pose key questions.

Yet none of these books marks a complete break with the obituary sketch with which we began. According to Terrill, the most historiographically aware of the three authors, that is because the transformation of Mao's story has been a gradual and incremental process. For Adolf Hitler, the sharp caesura of defeat meant that the atrocities of his regime were confronted first hand and at once. Mao's atrocities, by contrast, have had time to fade away (as Hitler's might have if World War II had ended in compromise and the Holocaust had not become fully known or acknowledged until the 1980s). For such reasons Mao has avoided blanket condemnation. One can still display Maoist memorabilia in one's living room (I have a shadow box of Mao badges collected by my late father-in-law, one of his victims), whereas a picture of Hitler would be a solecism.

Morality, Sociology, and Biography

An interpretative shift is nevertheless well under way. Mao's cruelty and destruction are now clearly acknowledged and documented by all three

authors. So, in place of the old concern with Mao's thought and social significance, which informed thought until the time of his death, the question now being asked is, how did he do it? Spence opens powerfully with his answer: "Mao's beginnings were commonplace, his education episodic, *his talents unexceptional*, yet he possessed a relentless energy and a ruthless self-confidence that led him to become one of the world's most powerful rulers" (p. xi, emphasis added). Terrill's answer in his conclusion is similar: "[T]here was a personal fire in him. . . . He was certain of himself, and of the eventual triumph of his peasant army. That—beyond mere hunger for power—gave him a will of granite" (p. 459). Personal qualities, in other words, were critical to Mao's success in winning power and holding it longer and more effectively than any other figure in twentieth-century China.

Chinese have traditionally linked individual qualities to political success in two mutually exclusive ways. The first, which is imbedded in the Confucian moral mainstream, perceives power as a matter of moral influence. The true king wins followers by winning hearts through his virtue; indeed, he can even win battles that way. In the traditional account of Muye, an ancient battle at which the Zhou defeated the Shang, virtue alone ensured victory. The mere presence on the field of the Zhou leaders caused the Shang troops to mutiny, so victory was won without any clash of armies. In other words, according to this appealing Chinese belief (also not unknown in the West), the good will reliably win provided they are truly good. But it is the second approach to power that has traditionally fascinated Chinese. This one perceives the gaining and holding of power as basically an amoral business of clever deception and strategy triumphing against the odds. This is the school of Sun Zi and other writers on military affairs and it feeds, with a substantial admixture of moral content, into such classics as Luo Guanzhong's *Three Kingdoms* and the story of the great strategist Zhuge Liang.⁴ According to this account the winners are the really skilled liars ("all warfare is deception," writes Sun Zi), manipulators, and tacticians.

But if these approaches are still distinct in China, they have become melded together in the West. There, the rise of the sociological interpretation of history (starting in France around the turn of the last century) caused a general denigration of the importance previously imputed to such things as battles and the skills needed to win them and a correspondingly higher evaluation of the importance of such larger factors as demographic trends, social pressures, economic shifts, and so forth. This might sound amoral as well, but in fact Westerners raised on the redemptive stories of Christianity and Judaism had great difficulty adopting a sort of Hindu-style moral impartiality with respect to the actions of great material forces, whether creative or destructive, and strived to see some positive purpose in their workings. That

⁴ See Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, trans. Moss Roberts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

was what Marxism was all about: the Great Historical Forces were propelling us objectively not just Somewhere, but Somewhere Better. The twentieth century was the heyday of such views, when the tendency to spot the *Zeitgeist* mounted on a military steed (in Hegel's famous remark about Napoleon) was evident not only in Germany and Italy, but also in China. What this meant was that the first studies of Mao in the West paid overwhelming attention to Mao's role as a philosopher in action, the incarnation of the spirit of his age.

As a philosopher, Mao's role, so it was thought, had been to articulate the basis for a new Chineseness that would supplant that of Confucianism. The whole Chinese civilization was, by many twentieth-century accounts, of no use or value whatsoever under modern conditions and needed to be replaced in its totality. That misguided belief would unleash the most virulent orgy of cultural self-destruction ever seen in human history. Many Chinese intellectuals believed this and some still do. In the West, the late Joseph Levenson was its most articulate exponent, with his memorable argument that for the Chinese the cultural past could only exist in a museum (unlike his own Judaism, which, he reportedly discovered shortly before his death, still contained living sparks).⁵ Mao had solved this problem, so the argument went, by Sinifying Marxism and thus creating a usable intellectual and moral synthesis to take the place of the old Confucian orthodoxy.⁶ Hence the attention paid to Mao as a thinker.

Mao's role as a social reformer was interpreted in similar fashion. The social system that China carried into the twentieth century—familial, local, hierarchical, patriarchal, with vast gulfs in income and education—was likewise unsuited to modernity. No less than a complete transformation was required, and this Mao provided by means of a new nomenclature (along with workers and soldiers, there were rich, middle, and poor peasants)—and a new economic system based on collectivized agriculture and socialized industry. Accordingly, Mao succeeded in gaining power where others such as Chiang Kai-shek had failed precisely because he understood China's objective social problems and unleashed their latent power. Locked up in the social contradictions of the Chinese countryside was the possibility of a social chain reaction: one after another of the obsolete bonds could be broken and the people liberated.

This was the story told by William Hinton in his immensely influential *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, the purpose of which, according to the preface, was "to reveal, through the microcosm of Long Bow Village, something of the essence of the great anti-imperialist,

⁵ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

⁶ Benjamin Schwartz was an important exponent of this view. See *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1951).

anti-feudal revolution which transformed China in the first half of the twentieth century and unleashed political and social forces so tremendous that they continue to shake not only China but the world.”⁷ The Chinese people were rising like a wave to demand collective economics and the replacement of clan and religious leadership (the Long Bow area was heavily Catholic), and this vividly rendered social drama captured the imagination of a generation of scholars. It was, alas, exploded in due course, not only by statistically minded critics, but also by Hinton himself. His return to Long Bow forty years after the events to which he had devoted *Fanshen* led to a fascinating sequel, *Shenfan*.⁸ He finds that the land is divided again, at least one of the heroic proletarian activists of his earlier book is exposed as a sociopathic thug, and the Catholic Church emerges from persecution stronger than ever.

Still, when Mao died the conventional wisdom, both academic and journalistic, explained Mao’s success in terms of the Great Social Forces he harnessed, and his greatness stemmed from the fact that his ideas and leadership were in accord with the spirit of the age. He had created a stable system and laid a sound foundation for further development, and he had been able to do so because he had understood how to transform values and economic structures.

**Few people still
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philosopher.**

Few people still take Mao seriously as a philosopher.

Even Benjamin Schwartz was reported to have said toward the end of his life that if he had known more of the facts about Mao such as Dr. Li revealed he probably would not have done so either. As for the economic system created by Mao and destined to shake the world, it was, most would agree, a mirage. Certainly few Chinese pay attention to it any

longer. The Maoist face of China, with its slogans in red and white and its general lack of bustle, has in the last twenty years been squeezed out of existence as gaudy new urban development takes up where pre-Communist China left off. The claim to have modernized the country, which Butterfield made for Mao, has been more convincingly appropriated by Deng Xiaoping and his successors.

So how are we to understand Mao’s importance today? Very simply that he got power, held it, and molded China not so much according to historical imperatives as according to his personal will. How did he do it? He was demonstrably not virtuous by any standard of measure, so Confucianism cannot explain his success. Nor did his policies ride any irresistible tide of history, as sociological historians suggested. We need to apply an entirely new framework for thinking about where power comes from and how

⁷ William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Knopf, 1966), p. ix.

⁸ William Hinton, *Shenfan: The Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Random House, 1983).

people get it, one that owes more to Sun Zi than to Emile Durkheim. Terrill, Spence, and Short agree, in effect, that Mao acquired power, first, by genuinely craving it, feeling entitled to it, and convincing others of his claim. Secondly, he got power by making brilliant use of the opportunities that history provided him and exploiting them to move towards his goal. This approach is very different from the more conventional sociological interpretation. Mao's skills are most clearly visible in two situations he had nothing to do with creating: the war of resistance against Japan (1937–45), and the period of war termination and civil war in China (1945–49).

The Great Tactician

An enduring myth of World War II in Asia is that Chiang Kai-shek was a defeatist who fought Japan half-heartedly and very conventionally, while the Communists under Mao fought implacably and unconventionally, using guerrilla warfare and other “asymmetrical” strategies. The wide currency of this idea in the West is owed at least in part to wartime reportage and propaganda, as well as to the work of the brilliant Marine Corps brigadier general Samuel B. Griffith who, after his retirement, translated and published a Maoist guerrilla tract that he had picked up during his service in China. In it he examined both the military tactics of Maoist people's war and its putative social base.⁹

In fact, the limitations of guerrilla tactics were clear to the Communists even before the Japanese war began.¹⁰ Those tactics had proved impotent to stop the Chinese Nationalists' counterinsurgency once they learned the ropes, and for all the comparison of Mao on the Long March to Alexander the Great, the fact is that Mao was in constant retreat and would probably have had to flee to Mongolia (then a satellite of the Soviet Union) if the Japanese invasion had not crippled the Nationalists in 1937–38.

Nor was Mao quite the patriotic firebrand often portrayed. When war came, many Communists were carried away by the general fervor to defeat the Japanese invaders and wanted to work closely with the Nationalists toward that end. This was also Moscow's desire, as Philip Short makes clear, because an effective Chinese resistance would reduce the possibility of a Japanese invasion of the Soviet Far East. Mao was concerned lest his army be absorbed in the Nationalist chain of command and thus lose its independence. He was also concerned lest its manpower be wasted, as he saw things, through set-piece battles with the Japanese. He therefore favored deep withdrawal and a stress on recruitment and preparation for the moment when circumstances might decrease the risks of fighting. Hence, Mao spent the war

⁹ Samuel B. Griffith, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1961).

¹⁰ Much revealing information is found in Gregor Benton, *Mountain Fires: The Red Army's Three-Year War in South China 1934–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

years in remote Yan'an lecturing on art and politics while both Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang were nearly killed, in separate incidents, by Japanese attacks.

Those Communists who fought too actively or successfully were even criticized, as Short documents: Lin Biao for the Pingxingguan ambush and Peng Dehuai for the Hundred Regiments Offensive, two of the most heroic Red battles. Mao's passive approach was often difficult for other Communists to accept. When Wuhan was besieged by the Japanese, Zhou Enlai (liaison to the Nationalists) wanted to hold it in the way he imagined Madrid had been held against Franco in the Spanish Civil War, by mobilizing workers and applying irregular tactics.¹¹ Mao favored immediate withdrawal. These disagreements left deep scars, and much of the personal bitterness and hostility after 1949 between Mao and such figures as Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai may well date back to Mao's reluctance to fight the Japanese.

But Mao was certainly more than willing to fight other Chinese in order to seize the power to which he felt entitled, and in the end his calculations with respect to the war proved correct. The Chinese could not triumph unaided. It took American intervention to save China. Chiang's forces took heavy casualties in the war, and the irreplaceable officer corps in particular was almost wiped out. Mao's forces, by contrast, grew dramatically. He had not succumbed to the lure of heroic but futile battle and thus emerged from the war stronger than ever, with greater prestige and with his resolve confirmed that complete power should and would belong to him.

**Once in power,
Mao was a great
disappointment.**

In the postwar period Mao again calculated brilliantly. Chiang Kai-shek had to reclaim and hold all of China if his claim to authority was to be taken seriously (the same dilemma Beijing faces today vis-à-vis Taiwan). But that was a formidable if not impossible task for his exhausted and disorganized army and government. Mao, on the other hand, could make progress merely by keeping his forces intact and scoring the occasional success. It was a situation he understood well and exploited deftly. When the Soviet army moved into Manchuria in the last weeks of the war in August 1945, Mao quickly transferred some of his Red Army units there, daring Chiang to fight in the most unfavorable conditions possible or else accept a "Red China" in the northeast. When, in 1946, Chiang Kai-shek took the bait and mounted a massive invasion of Manchuria that nearly succeeded, Mao was saved by a cease-fire imposed on Chiang by the U.S. mediator, General George C. Marshall. Thereafter the Communists steadily turned the tide, responding with great resourcefulness to every new opportunity, transforming their light guerrilla forces into a well-armed and disciplined corps (with ample Russian

¹¹ We now know, thanks to the British scholar Paul Preston, that Franco could have taken Madrid early on but chose not to. See his *Franco: A Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 1993).

and Japanese weapons, as Spence makes clear [pp. 103–4]), and capitalizing on Chiang's strategic mistakes. When Manchuria finally fell to the Communists, followed quickly by northern China, Mao prevented Chiang from regrouping and reorganizing in the south with an impressive victory in the Battle of Huai Hai. The Nationalist regime on the mainland promptly collapsed, and Chiang and two million of his followers fled to Taiwan.

So how had Mao and his followers done it? The answer is not to be found in his social policies. Mao's so-called land reforms had much more to do with extracting funds and winning political battles than with solving any real economic problems. His ideas were not as persuasive as once believed either, and the suppression of dissent by Kang Sheng's secret police had at least as much to do with their acceptance in the party as did intellectual assent. Nor did Mao stand out as a patriot during years of unusual heroism in China. Rather, he had mastered the application of tactics in pursuit of a goal, in particular the tactic Sun Zi enunciates as *fa mou*: to balk the enemy's plans (according to Giles's translation) or to attack the enemy's strategy (according to Griffith's).¹² This was how he achieved power within the Communist Party, managed to increase the party's strength during years of wasting war, and ultimately defeated an initially stronger adversary in four years of civil war. Like a jujitsu fighter, he used the momentum of his opponent's attack to bring him down.

The conclusion, therefore, is that Mao really was more of a Great Man in the traditional Chinese sense than in the Western sociological sense. In the 1920s he joined the swarm of ambitious young Chinese eager to take power in the relative vacuum left by the Qing emperor's abdication, and like his rivals he was quite willing to use force. Indeed, as Short stresses, he became more and more wedded to the use of force during these years, in part as a result of Soviet examples. But he succeeded in this political struggle because he was a good strategist, not a good sociologist. In Chinese terms, one would say Mao followed not the way of the true king, with its moral and social dimensions, but rather the way of the hegemon (*ba*), whose personal power derived from his skill in neutralizing or capturing the power of others. Mao's win was a triumph not of ideas or social forces, but of amoral gamesmanship and a "contentless politics," in the wonderful phrase coined by the Australian China watcher who writes under the pseudonym John Byron.¹³

¹² See *Sun Tzu on the Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (London: Lutac and Co., 1910), p. 17; and *Sun Tzu: The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 77.

¹³ Personal communication with author. I strongly recommend the book by John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claus of the Dragon: Kang Sheng—The Evil Genius Behind Mao, and His Legacy of Terror in People's China* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

The Tactician in Power

Mao's tactical skill is also the key to understanding the ultimate catastrophe of Mao's career. All three of the most recent biographers agree that Mao in power was a great disappointment. But their explanations differ as to why this was so. Spence, in a characteristically long stretch, compares Mao to the "Lord of Misrule," who presided over certain medieval European holidays—and to be fair, it must be admitted that Mao, like the Lord of Misrule, sought to overturn all hierarchies. Philip Short seems to find the answer mostly in Mao's penchant for political struggle and calculation, which he documents thoroughly. He observes that "[r]evolution has more to do with tearing down the old than with painstakingly constructing the new," which is certainly true, though his next sentence is open to question: "Mao's legacy was to clear the way for less visionary, more practical men to build the shining future that he could never achieve" (p. 633). Perhaps, but it is not at all clear to most Chinese today that Mao's "clearing the way" was either necessary or effective. Among other things, he "cleared away" a lot of talented people, useful knowledge, and functional institutions. Furthermore, as Ross Terrill points out, much of what Mao and the Communists dreamt of—the planned economy, the collectivized countryside, the new culture—was, most would now agree, simply impossible.

The basic problem was that Mao in fact had no clear idea of what to do with power once he had won it. "If Germans invented socialism as a science," Terrill writes with true insight, "Mao, at his best, softened socialism into a social morality. He wanted not only a new state, but a new type of citizen, who lived for his fellows." The disadvantage was that "old Mao did not quite know *what* pattern of society he wanted" (p. 463), with the result being that he could never rule effectively. He had never thought out the real issues of building a modern China out of the rich heritage of the Chinese past. He had no grasp of science, constitutional theory, economics, or engineering. (Li Zhisui believes that Mao genuinely wanted to do something good for China, but was too ignorant to know how to proceed.) Without any azimuth of his own, he therefore improvised erratically, first embracing all things Soviet, as if communism could be ordered from Moscow as from a Sears catalog and taken out of boxes. Then he rejected the Soviet model in favor of things Chinese as he understood them. Finally, towards the end of his life he reached out to the West, but never conclusively. As Terrill observes, "Mao . . . could not, or did not want to, align the levels of his thought into a consistent pattern" (p. 414).

The theme of his years in power turns out to be the same as that of the years he spent acquiring power: struggle. Even when he was ensconced in Zhongnanhai and surrounded by flunkies, he still knew how to do little beyond identifying enemies, real or imagined, who were to be attacked, deceived, isolated, and destroyed. As a consequence, from the 1950s onward

he eliminated most of the comrades who had assisted his rise to power, including Liu Shaoqi, Peng Dehuai, and Lin Biao. Even the abjectly obsequious Zhou Enlai was saved from Mao's anger only by his own death. These intrigues, on which Short and Terrill are particularly good, are fascinating, but it is also evident that they were about nothing of any importance. Another leader might have transformed the victorious cadre of 1949 into an impressive administrative team and gotten on with the business of reconstructing China.

Students of war speak of the perils of the "tacticization of strategy," which means allowing small questions to drive large ones. Perhaps Mao's failure exemplifies the tacticization of policy. Like Lenin's, Mao's writings, even the ostensibly theoretical ones, can only be understood against the background of political exigencies. Party lines, deviations, theories, and so forth are all improvised to serve immediate needs and possess no intellectual consistency except insofar as they serve the quest for power as an end in itself. Lenin was spared full exposure because he died shortly after taking power. Mao lived on to rule for decades during which he proved unable to discard the lifelong habits of political struggle and learn instead how to build. Hence, the key to his success was also the key to his failure, for once he had won, Mao found himself, almost by habit, attacking his own party and followers and people, with undeniably catastrophic results.

Nixon as Scapegoat, Even on China

by Michael Jay Friedman

A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency. By William Bundy. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998. 768 pp. \$35.00.)

The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow. Edited by William Burr. (New York: New Press, 1999. 515 pp. \$35.00.)

Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of the Normalization of U.S.-China Relations. By John H. Holdridge. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997. 307 pp. \$71.00; \$24.95, paper.)

About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton. By James Mann. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. 352 pp. \$30.00.)

Cold War International History Project Bulletin, no. 11 (Winter 1998). Edited by Christian F. Ostermann. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.)

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The vagaries and polemics of Sino-American relations are bound to provide some relief this autumn from the vapid trivialities that dominate presidential campaigns. Especially enjoyable is the competition within the Republican camp over how to define foreign policy “realism.” According to one school, because Beijing poses the next great challenge to American interests and values, the United States ought to prepare to contain China (and if that effort serves as glue to an increasingly fissiparous American conservatism, so much the better). According to others, however, a “higher realism” suggests the wisdom of granting China full participation in the World Trade Organization in the expectation that eventually economic freedom and prosperity will lead to democratization.

The historical irony in this debate is that in no region of the world has U.S. foreign policy over the years consistently displayed less realism than in China, which Americans have alternately demonized or idealized as uniquely suited to American tutelage—with one noticeable exception. During the early 1970s, as Soviet power approached its zenith, the Nixon administration sought to engage Beijing without illusions and solely in the name of restoring a global balance of power. Controversial at the time, the *détente* with Beijing engineered by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger has only grown more so over the subsequent decades and is being revisited today in light of the collapse of the Soviet empire, American strategic confusion in the wake of it, and the declassification of some important primary source materials on the 1970s. It remains to be seen, however, whether that has inspired more sober historical perspective and judgment.

Did Kissinger Hoard His Documents?

Nixon and Kissinger took charge of U.S. foreign relations in the midst of a bloody, unpopular war. By 1969, the interminable Indochinese engagement had fractured the broad American consensus favoring containment of communism and legitimized a wide-ranging critique of U.S. strategy that had lain more or less dormant since the defeat of Henry A. Wallace in 1948.

What is more, the president, by dint of who he was, and Kissinger, for the *realpolitik* he espoused, educed the last measure of their opponents’ passion. Nixon’s willingness to expend more blood and treasure in the name of “peace with honor” in Vietnam and “credibility” elsewhere—concepts that heralded a determination to preserve American power abroad—drew vitriol from the Left. The traditional foreign policy establishment, the very “wise men” and “best and brightest” who had created the Vietnam morass, proved no friendlier to Nixon, whom they had considered an uncouth and dangerous outsider ever since his successful prosecution of Alger Hiss. Finally, on the anticommunist Right, Nixon’s *détente* policy only engendered frustration amid memories of his Park Avenue Compact with the despised Nelson Rockefeller.

To be sure, Kissinger enjoyed a transient popularity with the media

and public, but for more engaged policy critics he was merely the intellectual, urbane node of the Nixon lightning rod. Both conducted policy with a furtiveness that implied their contempt for the press, policy professionals, and indeed the American public. Nixon had a whiff of Joseph McCarthy about him, Kissinger of Bismarck and amoral power politics. Their stealth in preparing the China opening was especially galling to their critics because it sapped the Left's ability to harness the energies of radical students to reverse U.S. Cold War policy even as it deprived the Right of the chance to regroup for a victorious anticommunist crusade. Nixon's insistence on top-down state-to-state relations also threatened to inhibit the emergence of a new world order based on the East-West convergence and North-South dialogue increasingly favored by the centrist establishmentarians. Nixon and Kissinger therefore lacked natural allies, either at the time or in the historiographic battles that have been waged ever since.

This antipathy informs the attack on Kissinger's three volumes of memoirs recounting American diplomacy during the Nixon and Ford years. How, critics ask, can we accept the word of a policymaker who (uniquely, they seem to suppose) squirreled away key documents for his exclusive use? A whitewash is afoot, they suggest, and if the effort is redolent of Nixon's own post-presidential rehabilitation campaign, so much the better. The editorial commentary accompanying *The Kissinger Transcripts* adopts this line of attack in its rawest form. Other, more sober academics assert that at a minimum Kissinger arrogated to himself an unfair advantage.

Now, courtesy of the National Security Archive (NSA), scholars have in hand the transcripts of Kissinger's visits to China. Founded in 1985 by "a group of journalists and scholars who had obtained documentation from the U.S. government under the Freedom of Information Act and sought a centralized repository for these materials," the NSA is now, according to its web site, "the world's largest non-governmental library of declassified documents." This work necessarily runs at cross-purposes with those of a real-politiker like Kissinger, and ideally this tension is healthy. In fact, however, it produces an adversarial relationship as energetic researchers mine the texts for any new revelations that seem to reflect badly on Kissinger, even as the context of his words and deeds—the Vietnam and Cold Wars—seem almost quaint in the post-Cold War era. The common thread in the NSA's efforts is thus not hard to tease out. Its selective revelations carry titles such as *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History*, *Bay of Pigs Declassified*, *The United States and South Africa Declassified*, and the titillating *White House E-Mail: The Top Secret Computer Messages the Reagan-Bush White House Tried to Destroy*. And more is promised, including the results of NSA's "Guatemala Project," the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, new releases about the 1973 Chilean coup, and links to a new book, *Israel and the Bomb*. The intention is always to "expose" the hypocrisy of Cold War America and its client states.

It is no surprise, then, that senior NSA analyst William Burr, editor of *The Kissinger Transcripts*, concurs with those who accuse the former secretary of state of having shielded his damning documents from political and academic competitors. His specific charge is that the departing secretary transferred “copies” of his White House and State Department papers to the Library of Congress, thus securing the protection of a “loophole in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).” By transferring his records to the legislative branch, Kissinger retained exclusive access for the purposes of writing his memoirs and (we are to assume) of preventing historians from producing competing accounts. The ever-secretive Kissinger’s “personal control . . . amounts to a deliberate inconvenience for researchers” (p. xi).

Burr’s account is singularly misleading. One obtains Kissinger’s documents the same way one does those of any other U.S. statesman—by traveling to the federally funded presidential library (or in the case of Nixon, who alone was denied a library, the Nixon Presidential Project at the National Archives), reviewing the sanitized files, and requesting a mandatory declassification review for the items one desires. The process takes about a year. It is less convenient than a quick visit to the Library of Congress, but no more onerous than the routine trips scholars must make to Independence, Missouri, Abilene, Kansas, or Austin, Texas, to study the Truman, Eisenhower, or Johnson administrations. The key lies in Burr’s all-too-quick admission that the secretary transferred “copies” to the Library of Congress. The diligent reader will note the admission, tucked away in a footnote, that “the Gerald Ford papers at the Ford Library also include significant Kissinger material from 1974–77.” In fact, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library houses the originals of the materials in question, collected in the “Kissinger-Scowcroft Files.”

This is more significant than an intramural dispute among specialized researchers. At stake are matters of reputation that spread inexorably to other specialties, to historians at large, and thence to the status of “received wisdom.” The prominent China scholar Jonathan Spence, to offer one example, might have little reason to study the niceties of American declassification procedure. One can hardly fault him for relying upon Burr’s expertise. When upbraided by Kissinger, however, Spence more or less conceded the point. “Regardless of what may be inflated claims for the difficulty of gaining access to these transcripts,” he replied, “I am glad that we have them now in published form.”¹

We should all share his reaction. At a time when competing visions of relations between the United States and China again rank high among our concerns, recent literature about the China opening affords us a window into differing perspectives on America’s proper role in the world, *how* the United

¹ See Jonathan Spence, “Kissinger and the Emperor,” *New York Review*, Mar. 4, 1999, p. 18, and the exchange with Kissinger in the same issue, “Talking with Mao: An Exchange,” p. 56.

States should make foreign policy, and the bitterness and personal enmities that still permeate informed discussion of the events of the Nixon/Kissinger era.

The Geopolitical Imperative

To understand why the authors think (or at least claim) that their new data and interpretations are revelatory, one must first review briefly Kissinger's own account of the opening to China, which is that of a geopolitical master delighted to encounter in Beijing interlocutors every bit as clear-sighted as he. Indeed, the secretary often found that accommodating the values of the American people was more exasperating than reconciling U.S. policy with Chinese interests, the reason being that the United States "possessed neither the conceptual nor the historical framework" for a foreign policy based in realism.² Thus, even as the Nixon administration explained with surprising candor its true tactics and objectives in its annual foreign policy reports, it sought to win over the American *public* for détente with China with promises of cultural exchange and commercial plenty.

For Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai these niceties were of small moment. They were, Kissinger says over and over, "the most unsentimental practitioners of balance of power politics I have encountered," who "coldly and unemotionally assessed the requirements of the balance of power little influenced by ideology or sentiment. They were scientists of equilibrium, artists of relativity."³ Kissinger could only have been pleased to discover this because geopolitical imperatives were the only forces pushing Beijing and Washington together. Moreover, Kissinger and the PRC leaders were fortunate to be able to write upon a *tabula rasa*. The two powers had been estranged for so long that there was little to discuss *but* strategy. Hence, their discussions were "the most conceptual and long-range. In truth, we had nothing else to talk about in those early days and no other means to build the ties we were determined to forge."⁴

That the two former enemies did share a common geopolitical cause was certain for Nixon and Kissinger, if not for their State Department and left-leaning academic critics. With the 1969 Sino-Soviet clashes along the Ussuri River and the dispatch of some forty Red Army divisions to the Chinese frontier, the PRC needed rapprochement with Washington. Kissinger in turn believed that a Chinese defeat or accommodation of the Soviet Union would turn those Soviet divisions westward, sap the will of America's allies to resist Moscow, and ultimately tilt the long-term balance of power against the Western alliance.

² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*; and Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 1087.

⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 746; *Years of Upheaval*, p. 138.

As one would expect from an admirer of Metternich, Kissinger portrayed his “triangular diplomacy” as more subtle than a mere play of the putative China card. As the weaker party, the PRC preferred an earlier showdown with the Soviets and feared that the concurrent U.S. policy of détente with Moscow would place Washington at the triangle’s pivot, if not yield a Russo-American condominium. Kissinger expended considerable effort in an attempt to disabuse Mao and Zhou of the notion that Washington sought ultimately to “reach Moscow by standing on China’s shoulders.” Rather, he argues, the Nixon administration sought neither a superpower condominium nor an anti-Soviet alliance, but rather to possess more options toward the other two players than they did toward each other. The opening therefore was an attempt to achieve balance, because a policy that tilted toward either Communist giant carried its own risks. Too weak a stance against Soviet expansionism, Kissinger feared, might cause Beijing to patch up its rift with Moscow. Too hard an anti-Soviet line might tempt Brezhnev into a preemptive strike against China. Thus, the Sino-Soviet rivalry was something that America could “exploit” only by not actively trying to do so. The most that could be achieved was for the two countries to pursue “parallel” policies.⁵

Because Kissinger ascribed to Mao and Zhou the same balance-of-power tenets that informed his own strategy, much of his diplomacy sought to convince the Chinese leaders of U.S. reliability as an opponent of Soviet expansionism. But two sorts of Nixon critics disagreed with those tenets and therefore prescribed mischievous policy initiatives. Academics, “feell[ing] themselves cheated, deprived of the excitement of the proximity to power,” pressed their own, more “complex” strategy. American concessions were the key to better relations, they said, and the PRC’s primary concerns were recovering Taiwan, achieving U.N. membership, getting America out of Vietnam, and trade.⁶ State Department professionals hewed to a similar analysis, opposing a China opening as threatening to relations with the Soviet Union as well as to their own efforts to secure a compromise over PRC membership in the United Nations. Like the academics, State assumed that Beijing cared about matters of honor (Taiwan) and economics (trade) more than security. But Nixon and Kissinger (alone, in the latter’s account) closed their ears to such noise and followed instead their own correct assessment of Beijing’s strategy, with the result that the United States emerged with its long-term geostrategic position much improved, despite the terrible short-term damage wrought by the Vietnam War and Watergate.

⁵ See Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 165, 191–92, 1076; and *Years of Upheaval*, p. 54.

⁶ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 705.

The Establishment Strikes Back

No definitive “Establishment” account of Nixon’s China opening appeared until 1998, with William Bundy’s *A Tangled Web*.⁷ Surely, no one better embodies the genealogy and professional experience we associate with the “wise men” and as assistant secretary of state for East Asia under Kennedy and Johnson, no one was more responsible for American engagement in Vietnam. Not surprisingly, Bundy’s main purposes in *A Tangled Web* are to attack Nixon and Kissinger for failing to extract America from Vietnam with suitable dispatch, damn them for the collapse of Cambodia, and fault them for mishandling relations with China. In his view, the opening was inevitable, not some Nixon “coup,” accomplished far less than we have been led to believe, and would have been even less significant if not for the influence of Zhou Enlai and the State Department. Indeed, if Nixon and Kissinger are entitled to any credit, it is due only to their access to secret information unfairly withheld from the professionals.

Bundy relies primarily upon the first two Kissinger memoirs, occasionally supplemented with references to an unpublished manuscript by former under secretary of state Marshall Green. In Bundy’s account, neither Nixon nor Kissinger initially prioritized strengthening ties with the People’s Republic or recognized the significance of the Ussuri clashes. When the two men did warm to the task, theirs was not the sophisticated triangular diplomacy of the Kissinger memoirs, but a clumsy attempt “to discomfort and worry the Soviets” (pp. 100–104). Hence, the blame for the subsequent cooling of Sino-American relations clearly falls on the crude Cold Warriors who opened China for the wrong reasons.

Bundy, of course, is free to dismiss Kissinger’s and Nixon’s memoirs as hard evidence for their motives, but all he musters to support his alternative theory is an excerpt from Marshall Green’s notes of a meeting with the president that is, at best, ambiguous: “The President agreed with my further comment that we should not do things designed to play on Sino-Soviet differences, but, if there were sound reasons for taking moves which have the incidental effect of exploiting Sino-Soviet differences, the advantage was double” (p. 104).

At times, Bundy leaves the reader to ponder whether the Nixon administration could do anything right. Even Kissinger’s cordial working relationship with Zhou proved harmful, Bundy concludes, because Sino-American relations became dangerously dependent upon their rapport. Had Nixon and Kissinger not cut the Foreign Service out of the loop, he implies, relations would have been more regular and secure. Yet it was not entirely

⁷ Bundy’s book was previously reviewed by Frank Gavin (“Acheson, Nixon, and the Politics of Deception,” *Orbis*, Spring 1999, pp. 336–42), but not in the specific context of the China opening.

snubbed, because Bundy boasts of how State drafted the critical language for the Shanghai Communiqué, cleaning up Kissinger's careless mistakes.

For Bundy, the monopolization of foreign policy making in the Nixon White House was harmful to U.S. relations with other nations as well. Employing the secret Pakistani channel may have helped to initiate and sustain communications with Beijing, but Nixon and Kissinger incurred a personal debt to Yahya Khan that obliged a "tilt" in favor of the oppressive Islamabad regime in the 1971 conflict with India. The author ignores the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty and the Nixon administration's need to demonstrate reliability to the People's Republic.

Likewise, Nixon's failure to tip off Tokyo about his impending trip to Beijing stunned and humiliated Japanese prime minister Eisaku Sato. Never again, Bundy quotes former ambassador U. Alexis Johnson as saying, has there been "the same trust and confidence between our two governments" (p. 240). While Kissinger would later express regret for Sato's loss of face, he agreed with Ambassador Armin Meyer's judgment to the effect that he and Nixon had acted properly, since the Japanese were known to be "chronically unable to maintain confidentiality," and since other allies could make equally strong claims to advance notice. What the "Nixon shokku" really did was deprive Tokyo of "its desired opportunity to stay *ahead* of us on a road it had started traveling long before we did."⁸

Finally, and most controversially, Bundy faults Nixon for his handling of the Taiwan issue. Zhou and the "Chinese moderates" needed progress on this matter, which State understood but Kissinger did not (Bundy, p. 166). Here one confronts the most elementary difference between Kissinger and critics such as Bundy. For the latter, Sino-U.S. relations could only be strengthened by removing irritants such as Taiwan and promoting trade and travel between the two countries. For Kissinger, the opening merely reflected geopolitical reality, and forty Soviet divisions on China's northern border concentrated the minds of Beijing's leaders far more than Taiwan did. What is more, Bundy himself concedes this when he attributes the impetus for the opening to the Ussuri clashes and Soviet buildup. Yet he persists in faulting Kissinger for not stressing matters of culture and trade.

In sum, the critiques of the opening in *A Tangled Web* are either contradictory, unsubstantiated, or a matter of priorities, and betray no sympathy for the fact that the Vietnam War, the crackup of America at home, and the presidential credibility gap were all bequests of Nixon's predecessor—and Bundy's boss—Lyndon Johnson.

⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 761–62.

A Diplomat's Diary

Subtitled "An Insider's Account of the Normalization of U.S.-China Relations," John H. Holdridge's *Crossing the Divide* tantalizes the reader with the prospect of juicy anecdotes and first-hand insights. As director of the Office of Research and Analysis for East Asia and the Pacific in Lyndon Johnson's State Department, Holdridge briefed William Bundy on a daily basis, only to become, in July 1969, Kissinger's senior staff member for East Asian and Pacific affairs (so much for Kissinger's snubbing the "pros"). Holdridge prepared the briefing books for Kissinger's secret July 1971 trip to Beijing, attended many of the key meetings between Chinese and American leaders, served from 1973 to 1975 as deputy chief of the U.S. liaison office in China, and in 1979 became national intelligence officer for East Asia and the Pacific.

For better or worse, however, *Crossing the Divide* is not an exposé. Rather, its merits lie in its tight, balanced account of Sino-American relations from 1949 through the opening and of a diplomat's life in a regime determined to suppress not only overt political dissent, but innocent fun. Holdridge shares any number of evocative vignettes, from the policeman shooing interested onlookers away from a concert staged by Western diplomats, to the torments of educated Chinese youths exiled to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, to the diplomatic incidents provoked by bored and drunken U.S. Marines, to the equally bored (but sober) Chinese audience leaving a Jiang Qing-inspired revolutionary opera in stony silence. Indeed, Beijing appears in these pages as a polluted ghost town, its dark streets empty but for the omnipresent police and wind-driven soot. One memorable scene describes liaison chief George Bush and his wife Barbara pedaling their bicycles furiously through the blowing ash. Respiratory infections were common among the U.S. delegation. Nor can a resident diplomat escape the reminders that Communist China was (is?) a totalitarian state that subjected its own people and foreigners to petty harassment for so many imagined "offenses" that American diplomats lived in a "climate of suspicion."

Unfortunately, when he turns to the narrative of high policy, Holdridge serves up the same light fare. We learn that he arrived late for Nixon's February 22, 1972, meeting with Zhou, earning stares of disapproval, but nothing about the historic exchange except that Nixon and Zhou discussed "our mutual problems in relations with the Soviet Union, the vexing question of Vietnam (where our interests diverged considerably), and our differing views on threats to peace in East Asia" (p. 88). On many such occasions Holdridge was uniquely placed to gain insights, but if he did, he does not share them here. Assigned to brief American allies on the results of the Beijing summit, he writes that "Hashimoto [of the Japanese Foreign Ministry] accepted our assurances of improved regional stability at face value" and that the Malaysian prime minister's study featured a beautiful collection of Malay

swords. His account of earlier events seems to be that of a career Foreign Service officer trying (in the same fashion as Bundy) to credit the State Department with laying the basis for Sino-American détente. But his respect for Kissinger evidently grew, and he agreed with his new boss on a number of important matters, for instance, that Tokyo must be kept in the dark about the opening to China; that a vigorous U.S. response to Hanoi's 1972 Easter Offensive would not jeopardize relations; and that Congress deserved a considerable share of the responsibility for the Khmer Rouge's crimes in Cambodia. But however useful *Crossing the Divide* is as a source of collateral information that helps to establish the mood and *mise en scène* of the China opening, it does little more than Bundy's book to shrink that vast arena of speculation in which Kissinger and his critics have sparred for years.

A Journalist's Notebook

As diplomatic correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, James Mann covered Sino-American relations for years, concluding in the end that bad choices made by Nixon and Kissinger so long ago contributed substantially to the post-1989 deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations. *About Face*, Mann's study of this "curious relationship," spans the entire period from Nixon to Clinton. As a result, the chapters discussing the opening are designed to advance Mann's overall argument that

Nixon's and Kissinger's operating style in dealing with China set the tone for future administrations, too. The two men relied heavily on secrecy. They were often willing to let Chinese leaders set the terms, conditions and setting for negotiations, especially by conducting high-level meetings almost exclusively on China's turf. The Nixonian diplomacy was intensely personalized. It circumvented the ordinary processes of government, allowing Chinese leaders to concentrate on a single top-ranking U.S. official with whom they would do business, an individual like Kissinger who could be cultivated and flattered (pp. 51–52).

The consequences of this top-down diplomacy redounded to China's benefit. Time and again, PRC diplomats successfully played American leaders off against their domestic opponents. Secret diplomacy fostered the geopolitical relationship Kissinger desired but could not cultivate deeper ties. Consequently, after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and the fall of the Soviet Union, there was little left to sustain the relationship.

With regard to the opening itself, Mann advances considerably our knowledge of American diplomatic maneuvers thanks to his declassification of important materials, especially a RAND Corporation study summarizing for the Central Intelligence Agency all Sino-American high-level contacts between 1971 and 1985. Mann also relies (perhaps too much) on handwritten notes in which Nixon sketched in bullet form his talking points for meetings with Mao and Zhou. Another important source is interviews, most notably the

recollections of Sultan Muhammad Khan, the Pakistani diplomat who effectively ran the secret channel that produced Kissinger's first secret Beijing visit. We learn from Khan how Nixon and Kissinger despaired at Zhou's message inviting a U.S. envoy for the sole purpose of discussing Taiwan: "We had to explain to the White House that for China this was only a starting gambit" (p. 28).

In certain instances Mann is unusually fair to Nixon, but in others less so. On the plus side, he traces Nixon's interest in improving relations with the PRC not to his oft-cited 1967 *Foreign Affairs* article, but to the American diplomats who hosted Nixon (at times unwillingly) during his 1965 and 1967 Asian tours. To Roger Sullivan in Singapore, Arthur Hummel in Taipei, and Chester Bowles in India, it was apparent that Nixon was weighing a fundamental reassessment of U.S. China policy. Mann also disagrees with Kissinger's rather uncharitable distribution of credit for the initial decision to seek rapprochement, relating instead Alexander Haig's version:

"Our leader has taken leave of reality," [Kissinger] intoned in mock despair. "He thinks this is the moment to establish normal relations with Communist China. He has just ordered me to make this flight of fancy come true." He grasped his head in his hands. "China!" (p. 19)

But if Nixon was looking ahead, Mann contends, he did so in no small measure for his own benefit. "Getting to China before the Democrats did became one of the driving forces behind Nixon's initiative to Beijing. Politics and political credit were never far from his mind and they constituted an even greater part of his secret diplomacy than has been realized" (pp. 18–19). But from Mann's own evidence it is hard to see why Nixon is any more culpable than, say, Edward Kennedy, who advocated recognizing the PRC and withdrawing U.S. forces from Taiwan—that is, until Nixon announced *his* trip to Beijing, whereupon Kennedy turned silent. Worse still was Senate leader Mike Mansfield, a Democrat who peppered Zhou with written requests in the belief that he could procure Chinese assistance in ending the Vietnam War, a belief Mann also attributes to Nixon for the purpose of condemning the president (but not the grandstanding senator) for naiveté.

Mann takes the side of Nixon's and Kissinger's critics on two major points of dispute. One is the relative importance of the Taiwan issue to the PRC leaders, the other the significance they attached to swift normalization of relations with Washington. In each case, the newly available primary materials allow him to evaluate the administration's account against those of its critics. The Kissinger memoirs, as noted, portray the Chinese leaders as cold-blooded realists who were concerned above all with the Soviet threat: "The small issue is Taiwan, the big issue is the world," said Mao.⁹ But Mann calls Kissinger's effort to downplay the Taiwan issue "at best misleading and

⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 1062.

incomplete,” and quotes Holdridge’s account of how Kissinger himself “finally said what I had written for him on no two Chinas; no one China, one Taiwan; no independent Taiwan,” whereupon Zhou replied, “Good . . . these talks may now proceed.” And if Taiwan was mentioned little thereafter, it was “only because Kissinger gave China the private assurances it sought at the beginning of the first meeting” (p. 33).

The second major dispute pertains to the importance the PRC attached to formal relations and to the promises Nixon and Kissinger may have given the Chinese regarding the time frame for establishing them. Kissinger offers little guidance here, attributing the less cordial atmosphere of 1975 to the Chinese perception of post-Watergate American weakness. Mann, however, believes that Nixon and Kissinger offered the Chinese a timetable, with full diplomatic relations to be established midway through Nixon’s second term. His sources for this are the RAND/CIA report and Nixon’s marginal note to himself: “I know our interests require normalization and it will occur” (p. 46). If we assume that Nixon and Kissinger did issue such assurances, we can hardly blame them. It required a series of unexpected political shocks even to delay recognition a few years longer. Who in 1971 could have anticipated

**Will the history
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political trial?**

Nixon’s resignation, the accession of Gerald Ford, and the latter’s dubious choice of Nelson Rockefeller for vice president, which all but ensured a challenge from the Republican Right that in turn rendered politically untenable the breaking of ties with Taipei? Still, the point is an important one for Mann, since it advances his contention that Nixon and Kissinger sowed the seeds of later Sino-American tension.

Mann also blames Nixon and Kissinger for setting in motion the now-regrettable “militarization” of the Sino-American entente. Now, it is hard to imagine that two powers drawn toward each other by common fear of the Soviets would *not* cooperate on matters of security. After all, if the United States had not been willing to strengthen the PRC, why would it have initiated the opening in the first place, and why would Beijing have entertained it? What is more, Mann himself observes that Nixon and Kissinger “had not designed the American opening to China as a joint venture against the Soviet Union” and that “opening to China was supposed to make America’s ties with the Soviet Union more amicable, not more adversarial” (p. 56). But what makes Mann’s accusation almost humorous is the fact that the militarization in question began in earnest *not* under Nixon or even Ford, but under Jimmy Carter and his security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Accordingly, Mann expends considerable energy tracing the intellectual pedigree of that shift to an academic study written during Nixon’s tenure in an effort to imply that Nixon and Kissinger, had they remained in power, would have made the same mistakes as their successors and thus are somehow to blame for everyone else’s mistakes as well as their own. Will we ever escape the

arena of speculation, or will the history of the Nixon years forever remain a political trial?

History as Sound Bite

The answer to that question will lie in how historians handle the fresh primary sources now coming to light. Even since the publication of *The Kissinger Transcripts*, several memoranda of the 1972 Nixon-Zhou talks have been declassified, supplementing the less substantive Nixon-Mao record available to editor William Burr.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Burr's volume assembles a good deal of the historical record in an accessible format and likely will attract a wider audience than the other books under review. All the more reason to distinguish between the transcripts themselves and Burr's tendentious editorializing about them.

In Burr's commentary, Sino-American relations began on a promising if unnecessarily secretive note, then faltered between 1974 and 1976 as a result of Kissinger's wrongheaded diplomacy. By failing to deliver full diplomatic relations to Beijing in timely fashion and make the requisite break with Taipei, Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger dashed Chinese hopes and spoiled the relationship. Then why is it, the puzzled reader asks, that the transcripts themselves support Kissinger's account of Chinese thinking and refute Burr's interpretation? Chairman Mao repeatedly said that he was willing to wait a hundred years if necessary for the Taiwan issue to be resolved. To be sure, formal ties would have to wait until the People's Republic recovered its wayward province (and Mao believed this would occur by force), but he did not seem concerned by the delays and separated the issue of Taiwan from that of relations with the United States.

Chairman Mao: I say that we can do without Taiwan for the time being, and let it come after one hundred years. Do not take matters on this world so rapidly. Why is there a need to be in such great haste? It is only such an island with a population of a dozen or more million.

Prime Minister Zhou: They now have 16 million.

Chairman Mao: As for your relations with us, I think they need not take a hundred years.

Secretary Kissinger: I would count on that. I think they should come much faster.

Chairman Mao: But that is to be decided by you. We will not rush you. If you feel the need, we can do it. If you feel it cannot be done now, then we can postpone it to a later date.

¹⁰ Additional declassified materials are available at (<http://www.seas.gwu.edu/nsarchive>).

Secretary Kissinger: [asserts U.S. wants full relations with Beijing but that for the time being domestic political concerns prevent severing relations with Taiwan] So the question is whether we can find some formula that enables us to have diplomatic relations, and the utility of it would be symbolic strengthening of our ties, because, on a technical level, the Liaison offices perform very usefully.

Chairman Mao: That can do.

Secretary Kissinger: What can do?

Chairman Mao: (Before translation) It can do to continue as now, because now you still need Taiwan.

Secretary Kissinger: It isn't a question of needing it; it is a question of practical possibilities.

Chairman Mao: That's the same. (laughter) We are in no hurry about Hong Kong either. . . . We have established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and also with India, but they are not so very good. And they are not even as good as our relations with you, which are better than our relations with them. So this issue is not an important one. The issue of the overall international situation is an important one.

Secretary Kissinger: I agree with the Chairman completely and on that we must understand each other, and I believe we substantially understand each other (*Kissinger Transcripts* [November 12, 1973], pp. 186–87).

If anything, the Chairman's convictions had only strengthened by October 1975. Burr is correct that relations were by that time more strained, but anxiety over Taiwan and normalization hardly seemed the reason. During the session when Mao accused the U.S. of "leaping to Moscow by way of our shoulders" and other geopolitical sins, he again played down the timing of a Taiwan resolution:

Chairman Mao: It's better for [Taiwan] to be in your hands. And if you were to send it back to me now, I would not want it, because it's not wantable. There are a huge bunch of counterrevolutionaries there. A hundred years hence we will want it (gesturing with his hand), and we are going to fight for it.

Secretary Kissinger: Not a hundred years.

Chairman Mao: (Gesturing with his hand, counting) It is hard to say. Five years, ten, twenty, a hundred years. It's hard to say. (Points toward the ceiling) And when I go to heaven to see God, I'll tell him it's better to have Taiwan under the care of the United States now.

Secretary Kissinger: He'll be very astonished to hear that from the Chairman (*Kissinger Transcripts* [October 21, 1975], pp. 391–92).

The hundreds of pages of verbatim transcripts reproduced in this volume provide ample material for delphic sinologists, but it becomes overwhelmingly obvious that what the Chinese really wanted to talk about was

the Russians. On the issues of Taiwan and normalization, the PRC's ultimate position remained rigid, but its timeframe was infinitely flexible. Kissinger's conversations with the Chinese focused instead on geopolitics and ranged widely from Europe to Asia, with the Soviet challenge in the forefront. In the typical pattern, the Americans would explain how their policies furthered the joint anti-Soviet enterprise. Certain agreements with Moscow were necessary to appease public opinion in the United States and among the craven European allies. Support for Israel meant the Arab states would learn to rely upon the United States rather than the Soviet Union to obtain Israeli "concessions."¹¹ The Chinese would reply with a more or less fervent suspicion that the United States sought to turn Soviet aggression eastward, to China's peril. Kissinger would respond that such a policy was not in America's interest because whichever way the "polar bear" turned first, he then would pivot and attack with augmented strength.

Neither impatience over Taiwan nor a desire to exchange embassies explains the rising Chinese disillusionment of the late Nixon-Ford years. The cause was instead China's perception of flagging U.S. power and will to check Soviet power. In a cordial 1973 meeting with Mao, Kissinger referred to the nuclear alert Washington had declared in response the Soviet threat to intervene in the Middle East war.

Secretary Kissinger: We are not afraid of them, Mr. Chairman. Every once in a while we have to take some strong measures as we did two weeks ago.

Chairman Mao: Those were not bad, those measures (p. 180).

It was only after Watergate, when it became clear that Washington would not challenge Soviet expansion in, for instance, Africa, that Mao's complaints about America's leaping to Moscow on China's shoulders grew strident.

What were the Chinese motives, and did they change over time? Thanks to the sterling work of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project, scholars now have a glimpse, albeit a small and selective one, into Beijing's reasoning. We have learned that Mao apparently saw Nixon's election as a chance to improve relations. In January 1969 the chairman ordered publication of the new American president's inaugural address in all major Chinese newspapers, an act that annotators Chen Jian and David L. Wilson call very unusual. When armed clashes began along the

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improve
relations.**

¹¹ Several interesting themes emerge in the discussion of the Arab-Israeli dispute. One is that the Chinese support for the Arab cause seemed at times to extend beyond the edge of rationality. Chinese diplomats insisted that the Yom Kippur War was a "big victory for the Arabs," while Kissinger pointedly suggested that the Chinese needed to distinguish between their preferred results and the actual facts on the ground. Also important is Burr's flat opposition to Kissinger's Middle East policies. Reducing Soviet influence in the region, he writes, would only increase Cold War friction. *Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 154.

Soviet border two months later, Mao instructed marshals of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to offer proposals as to how China should face the changing world situation, and the *CWIHP Bulletin* reproduces their two reports. Together they demonstrate that at least in that corner of the Chinese government, geopolitics took immediate priority over the Taiwan question. While both superpowers ultimately aimed at aggrandizement at China's expense, "Nixon takes China as a 'potential threat,' rather than a real threat," whereas the "Soviet revisionists have made China their main enemy, imposing a more serious threat to our security than the U.S. imperialists." The PLA leaders judged accordingly:

To a large extent, the Soviet revisionists' decision to launch a war of aggression against China depends on the attitude of the U.S. imperialists, which is far from satisfactory to them so far, and is their utmost worry in a strategic sense. The last thing the U.S. imperialists are willing to see is a victory by the Soviet revisionists in a Sino-Soviet war, as this would [allow the Soviets] to build up a big empire more powerful than the American empire in resources and manpower. Several times the U.S. imperialists have expressed a willingness to improve relations with China, which reached a peak during Nixon's recent trip to Asia. The Soviet revisionists are scared by the prospect that we might ally ourselves with the U.S. imperialists to confront them.

Marshal Chen Yi accordingly called for China "to utilize the contradiction between the United States and the Soviet Union in a strategic sense, and pursue a breakthrough in the Sino-American relations." But, in so doing, China "should not raise any prerequisite, which does not mean that we have departed from our previous stand on the Taiwan question. The Taiwan question can be gradually solved by talks at higher levels" (*CWIHP Bulletin*, pp. 166–71).

While these excerpts do not establish the mindset of the Chinese political leadership, it is significant that Mao solicited these reports and delegated the task to figures described by Chen and Wilson as "criticized during the Cultural Revolution but [who] had long enjoyed reputations as being experienced in practical policymaking." Add to this the well-understood consequences of failing to divine with sufficient dispatch the Great Helmsman's desires, and one may safely conclude that Chen Yi and his colleagues reached the conclusions Mao wanted them to reach.

What of Burr's other great theme to the effect that Kissinger claimed to be evenhanded between the USSR and China but in fact pursued a nefarious "tacit alliance" with the latter? Again, little in the transcripts supports this reading. American and Chinese leaders agreed that over the long run Moscow's ambitions would outstrip its capabilities, but they also agreed on the immediate danger. Nor did the "tacit alliance" amount to much during the Nixon and Ford years. Burr's commentary emphasizes American intelligence proffers and some tentative technology transfers (a computer and some

British aircraft engines), but these would only flower during subsequent administrations.

It is hard to escape the conclusion, given Burr's imaginative exegesis of the transcripts, that what truly irks him about Kissinger's diplomacy is that it aimed at "reinforcing a central U.S. role in world politics." As his preface makes explicit, Burr is among those who view realpolitik as passé, if not wicked. "Some readers may feel," he writes, "that the documents vindicate their assessment of Kissinger as a shrewd practitioner of balance of power diplomacy. Others, *taking the longer view*, may see him as a transitional figure in the complex passage to a post-imperial world in which America would be less central than it had been" (p. xvii, emphasis added). No one who adheres to such an interpretation could do other than depict the diplomacy of Nixon and Kissinger as reactionary and dangerous.

So it is that Burr's commentary combines personal sniping at Nixon and Kissinger with disparaging asides against policies that placed American self-interest above "soothing" the Soviet Union. The secretary is said to suffer from more than one "fit of pique," the administration he served displayed a "misguided obsession" with credibility, particularly with regard to its "client states" in Vietnam and Cambodia, and a deluded Kissinger "convinced himself" that the congressionally mandated bombing halt was responsible for the Khmer Rouge victory. Ultimately, Burr returns to his "longer view" of foreign relations to condemn the China opening as an atavistic geopolitical thrust that implicitly risked nuclear war.

Yesterday—and Tomorrow

Once upon a time the only laudatory thing mainstream liberals could find to say about Nixon was that he fashioned the opening to China. Now that the Soviet threat is gone, even that achievement is damned as evidence of Nixon's and Kissinger's secretive, personal, amoral, risky, naive, and incompetent diplomacy. They are alternately blamed for opening China, for not doing it soon enough, or for doing it for the wrong reasons. They are blamed whenever U.S. relations with China are deemed to be better than they ought to be and whenever they are deemed worse than they ought to be. They are blamed for selling out Taiwan and for not selling it out soon enough. They are blamed for the mistakes they allegedly made and for all the mistakes *other* administrations allegedly made. Thus do the present schools of thought contesting for control of America's foreign policy justify their own postures toward China's abuses of human rights, commercial violations, theft of American nuclear secrets, illegal campaign contributions, and threats against Taiwan. Whatever their approach, they preen themselves as the "not Nixon and Kissinger" school.

But Nixon and Kissinger did not govern in the 1980s, 1990s, or 2000s, and they held to no particular approach towards China or its regime per se. Rather, they took office in the midst of the Vietnam War, having witnessed a sharp increase in the Soviet Union's global military strength and the stridency of its rhetoric (the Brezhnev Doctrine). They presided over a nation at war with itself over the definition of American interest and even the basic morality of American engagement. They attempted to extract U.S. forces from Southeast Asia while limiting the damage done to America's geopolitical position. They recognized in China a powerful potential partner, not ally, in their effort to deter and contain the Soviet Union and had no illusions about the Chinese regime or reason to believe it would evolve into something less unpalatable. In short, they embraced Mao Zedong in the same way that Franklin D. Roosevelt embraced Stalin in 1941, and few of Kissinger's critics contest the necessity of that move.

Even the critics grant in these books that secrecy was required to pull off the coup, and that de-recognition of Taiwan and militarization of the U.S.-Chinese tie occurred after Nixon and Kissinger left office. If they are candid, they would also have to admit that the Chinese were eager to keep, not expel, American power in Southeast Asia in order to forestall the unification of Vietnam under the pro-Soviet, China-hating regime in Hanoi; that U.S.-Chinese relations turned sour precisely when Congress forced Ford to abandon South Vietnam; that the United States could not then sustain the relationship with Beijing without selling out Taiwan and arming Beijing; and that the United States could not afford to place human rights near the top of its Chinese agenda until well into, or after, the Gorbachev era. In short, Nixon and Kissinger inherited the domestic and foreign catastrophes created by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and tried their best to manage them. If they erred, it was in assuming that détente with Beijing and Moscow might persuade those regimes to cease aiding Hanoi and instead pressure North Vietnam to postpone its ambitions, as happened at Geneva in 1954.

Perhaps realpolitik will never sit well with Americans. With the USSR off the map, it certainly has no appeal for those Democrats (and Republicans) who have resurrected the myth of China as the world's biggest market and zone for American proselytizing, or for those Republicans (and Democrats) who depict China as an 800-pound gorilla that must be shunned and penned up at all costs. But so long as American policy lurches back and forth between daydreams and nightmares, the Chinese will be the only ones thinking strategically. And that guarantees that sooner or later Americans, too, will be obliged to consult the Nixon/Kissinger playbook. They will just call it something else.



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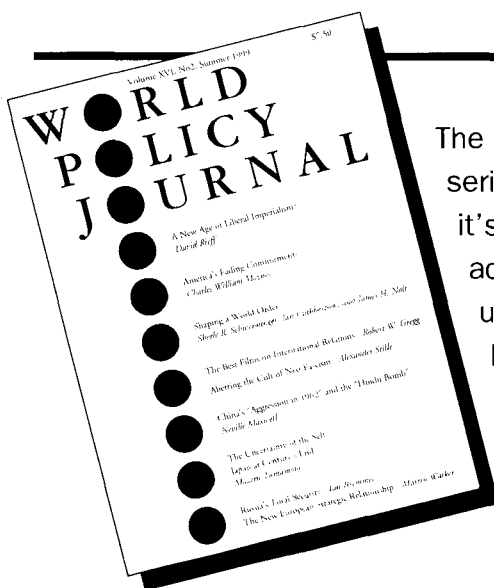
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